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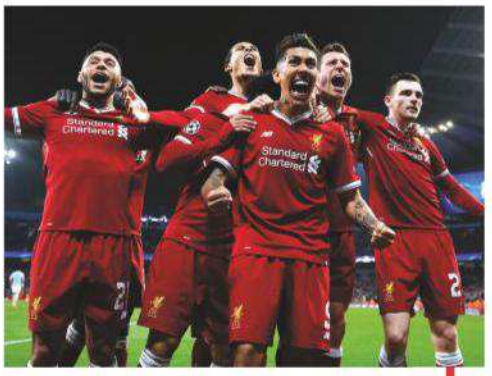

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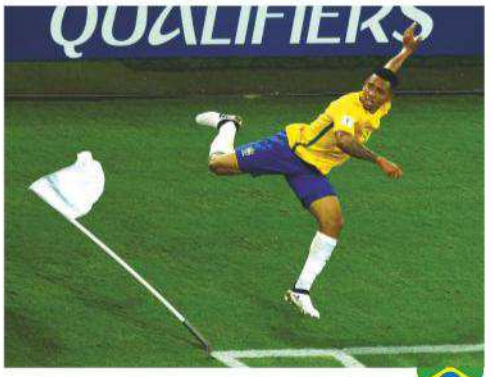

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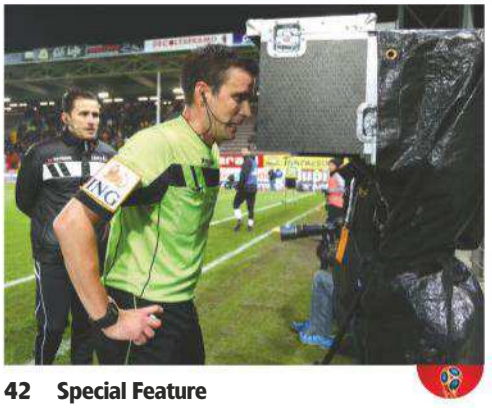

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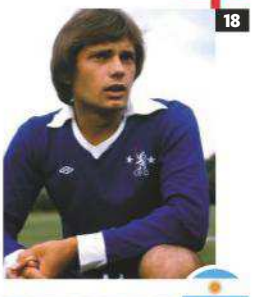

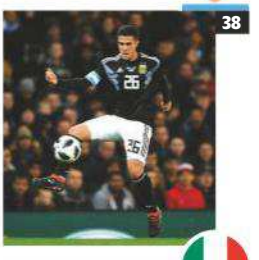

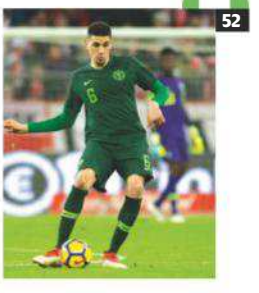

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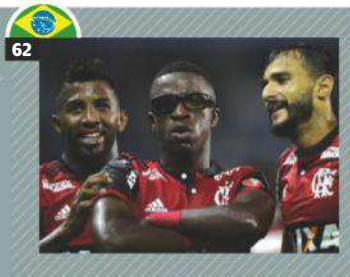

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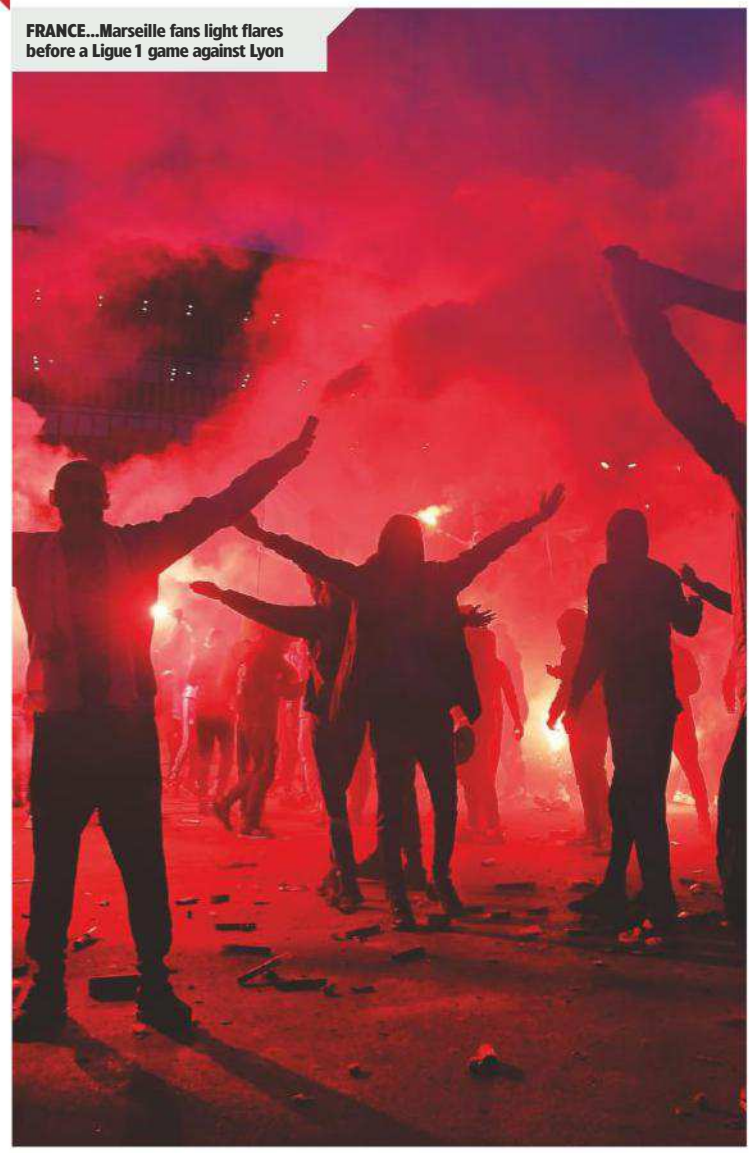

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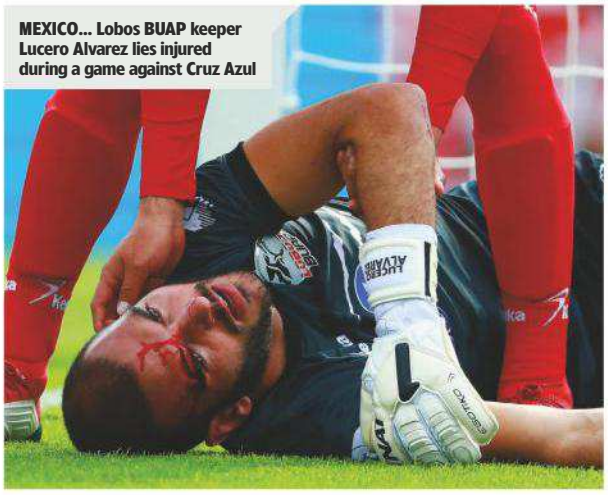

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FROM THE EDITOR

The introduction of the video assistant referee (VAR) is one of the most profound changes the game has ever seen. Yet FIFA, in its wisdom, is rushing ahead with its implementation at the forthcoming World Cup despite reservations from every trial.

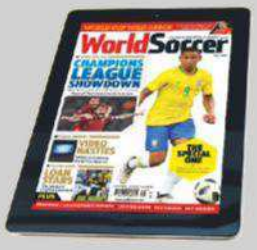
In a special feature this month (page 42) we assess the impact of VAR from the leagues around the world that are testing the system. There are no easy answers to how VAR should be introduced. One way to cushion the impact of VAR – a VAR-lite, if you like – would be to give VAR the power to intervene in a match, but not give the pitch referee the power of referral to the VAR, either in the stands, or pitchside. That way, the delays and indecisions on marginal calls would be reduced.

> FIFA is rushing ahead with VAR at the forthcoming World Cup despite reservations from every trial

This month we also look ahead to the Champions League semi-finals (page 24). Everything looks neatly poised with a team from each of England, Italy, Germany and Spain – and not necessarily the ones people expected.

We will return to the Champions League in June when we review the European season.

Next month, though, all our attention turns to the World Cup. Look out for our special edition!



Gavin Hamilton, Editor

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1 Roma stun Barcelona in Champions League quarter-finals p24
2 Liverpool overcome Manchester City in thriller p26
3 Bayern Munich target Champions League after winning Bundesliga p28
4 Real Madrid survive Juventus comeback to reach semi-finals p30
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6 Brazilian championship kicks off p62
7 Tributes to Ray Wilkins ..... p18 & 20
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10 Vote for 2026 draws closer p14

Last game...Vahid Halilhodzic was in charge for Japan's loss to Ukraine

JAPAN

Coach Halilhodzic sacked 70 days before World Cup

Japan replaced national coach Vahid Halilhodzic with technical director Akira Nishino just 70 days before the World Cup finals get under way.

The move followed poor results in friendlies played in Belgium in March, in which Japan drew 1-1 with Mali and lost 2-1 to Ukraine.

"After taking over from [Javier] Aguirre, he put together the team in a very short time and led the team to the finals," said JFA president Kozo Tashima. "He had a strong passion and love for soccer. However, he lacked communication with and the trust of the players after the friendlies in Europe. It was a consensus decision.

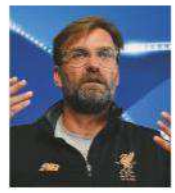
"We just wanted to improve the probability of winning the World Cup – even if it was by one or two per cent. We had to do something about it."

The Bosnian, who led Algeria to the 2014 World Cup, was dismissed by Ivory Coast in 2010, months before the World Cup in South Africa.

"As a technical director, I had to support the head coach, so I feel responsible [for his dismissal]," said Nishino. "Replacing the manager at this time is very difficult, but I decided to take the job because improving the team's situation is the top priority, instead of focusing solely on my own situation. I would like to work to gather everybody's strength with my whole body and soul ahead of the World Cup."

"It is idiots in this situation. How can you do that? It is not a little bit funny. It is dangerous, it feels bad"

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp condemns the fans who attacked Manchester City's team bus on its way to Anfield



TUNISIA

Msakni a major World Cup doubt

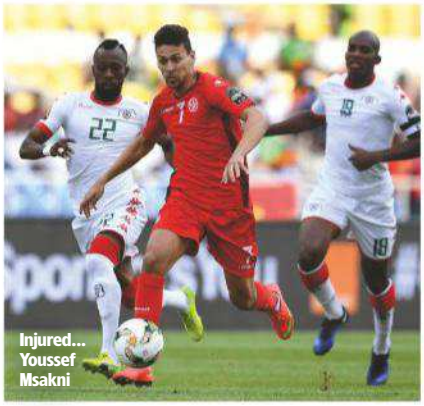
Tunisia's attacking midfielder Youssef Msakni is set to miss the World Cup after suffering a knee injury while playing for Qatari side Al Duhail.

Initially the 27-year-old ruled himself out of the finals in Russia, but it was then announced that he would travel to the USA for surgery in a bid to be fit in time.

Msakni had been identified by national coach Nabil Maaloul as his country's key player.

"Tunisia without Msakni? It's like Argentina playing without Messi or Portugal without Ronaldo," said Maaloul.

Tunisia are in Group G with England, Belgium and Panama.



Injured... Youssef Msakni

HEROES & VILLAINS

Charity...Udinese kit

UDINESE

The Serie A side's players each wore a different first-team shirt, from 11 different seasons, in their 2-1 loss to Lazio before the kit was auctioned for charity.

CHENG CHIN LUNG

Became the first Hong Kong player to score in the AFC Champions League group stage and helped his club, Kitchee, become the first Hong Kong side to win a game in that phase as they beat Japan's Kashiwa Reysol 1-0. And all of this after being plucked from Kitchee's reserve team due to a player shortage.

Historic...Cheng Chin Lung (left)

COLIN DOYLE

The goalkeeper played a full 90 minutes in the Republic of Ireland's 1-0 defeat away to Turkey in Antalya, then appeared for Bradford City 24 hours later in their English third-tier game at home to Gillingham, in which he kept a clean sheet in a 1-0 win.

AYOUB EL KAABI

The 24-year-old was on the scoresheet against Serbia and Uzbekistan in the latest round of international friendlies to make it 10 goals in his first six starts for Morocco.

LIVERPOOL FANS

Manchester City's team bus was attacked by Liverpool supporters on its way to Anfield for their Champions League quarter-final.

Red mist... City's bus

OCEANIA FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION

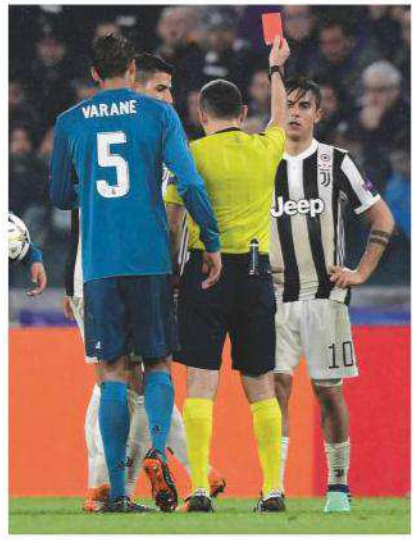
The OFC lost its president David Chung, who handed in his resignation for "personal reasons" after it was revealed that an audit has uncovered "potential irregularities".

SKENDERBEU

The Albanian club were banned from Europe for 10-years and fined €1million by UEFA for fixing more than 53 games between November 2010 and April 2016. The club have been accused of "manipulation attempts to obtain criminal betting profits on a stunning global scale" and having "no respect for the integrity of the game".

PAULO DYBALA

The Juventus attacker was sent off for a violent foul on Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal in the Champions League quarter-finals.



Off...Paulo Dybala is shown the red card

"Spain have slapped us"

Argentina boss Jorge Sampaoli reflects on the 6-1 defeat by Spain which equalled the country's heaviest loss

GOALS we'd like to see again

1 DELE ALLI
Tottenham H v Chelsea
A fantastic first touch and near-post finish following a long pass from Eric Dier.

2 LUKA JOVIC
Eintracht Frankfurt v Werder Bremen
Turns and fires home Kevin-Prince Boateng's brilliant back-heel assist.

3 ROMARIO IBARRA
Universidad Catolica v Delfin
Spectacular overhead kick following a cross from the right.

4 ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC
LA Galaxy v Los Angeles
Stunning, swerving volley from more than 40 yards for his first MLS goal, on his debut, in the Los Angeles derby.

5 AGUSTIN CANOBBIO
Penarol v Rampla Juniors
Makes a late run into the penalty area at a free-kick and scores with a scorpion kick into the corner of the net.

6 CRISTIANO RONALDO
Real Madrid v Juventus
Produces a spectacular scissor kick from the centre of the penalty area following a cross from Daniel Carvajal in the Champions League quarter-finals.

WINNERS

AL AHLY
The Egyptian champions became only the ninth team in history to win 40 national league titles.

GIBRALTAR
A Liam Walker goal against Latvia gave the Islanders their first victory since admission to FIFA.

JUPP HEYNCKES
The 72-year-old coach won his fourth Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich – 29 years after his first.

LOSERS

BRITISH REFEREES
This summer, for the first time in 80 years, there will be no British referee at the World Cup finals.

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW
Gave Amkar Perm the gate in return for playing their "home" game in Moscow – and lost 2-1.

BRECHIN CITY
The Scottish Championship club were relegated to the third tier without having won a league game.

"Clearly you cannot have a heart in your chest but a bag of rubbish"

Buffon makes it clear what he thinks of referee Michael Oliver (right)

HEADLINER: Gianluigi Buffon

Keeper exits Champions League with verbal volley

Judging by the Italian media's reaction, English referee Michael Oliver's decision to award Real Madrid a penalty in the 93rd-minute of their Champions League quarter-final clash with Juventus will not be forgotten any time soon.

Having lost the home leg 3-0, Juve battled back to level on aggregate in Madrid before Oliver presented Cristiano Ronaldo with the means to take the Spanish side through to the last four.

For some critics, it was not simply a matter of whether Mehdi Benatia's last-gasp tackle on Lucas Vazquez was a foul or not; they argue that you simply cannot award a debatable, all-decisive penalty so late in time added on in such an important game.

La Gazzetta Dello Sport summed up the Italian view by stating: "To award a debatable, 93rd-minute penalty which decides who gets into a Champions League semi-final is a refereeing mistake.

"Every referee well knows that there are moments when his decisions weigh more than others, so he should only blow clear and evident fouls.

"Was Benatia's tackle on Lucas Vazquez such an obvious foul? No, because, yes the tackle was risky but it was still open to interpretation.

"The doubts about the regularity of Benatia's tackle are legitimate but so too is it legitimate to argue that he committed no foul. That is why we say that you cannot award a penalty like that, not one that decides not just the game but also qualification to the next round of an important competition."

Someone who most certainly did not agree that it was a penalty was Juventus keeper Gigi Buffon, whose sending off for reacting to referee Oliver's decision delayed the spot-kick for five minutes.

It was a first red card for the 40-year-old in what was his 117th – and now last – Champions League game.

Speaking to Juventus TV after the match, Buffon confirmed that, very much as expected, he will retire at the end of this season. Originally, he had hoped to hang up his gloves following a summer World Cup in Russia, but that plan was scuppered by Italy's failure to qualify for Russia and he will walk away from the game as his country's most-capped player with 176 appearances.

The Champions League is one of the few trophies to have eluded Buffon and this year's Final in Kiev would have been a fitting stage on which to bid farewell. And his frustration at missing out on such a finale was clear to all those who saw him depart after his red card in Madrid. So enraged was he by events that he failed to pay attention to the standing ovation afforded him by the Bernabeu.

In the heat of the post-match moment, Buffon was inevitably highly critical of referee Oliver, saying: "That was a dubious incident, and you don't blow for a dubious incident in the 93rd minute, especially when we were denied a penalty right at the end in the first leg.

"You cannot decide to be a protagonist just because you don't have the personality to handle a stage like this.

"If you are not up to it, you should watch from the grandstand with your wife and eat a bag of chips. Oliver did not understand where he was, he did not understand which teams were playing, essentially he understood nothing."

> "If you are not up to it, you should watch from the grandstand with your wife and eat a bag of chips"
> **Buffon on referee Michael Oliver**

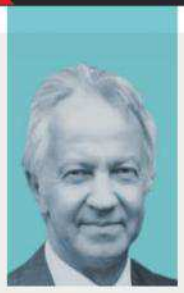
Buffon added that even if Real had "deserved" to go through, at the same time Juventus deserved to take the game to extra time. He was, however, full of admiration for his side's ability to score three goals at the Bernabeu and give Real Madrid such a huge fright.

As *La Gazzetta Dello Sport* concluded: "This remains a heroic performance, the 3-1 result is remarkable. In that context, the real regret concerns the first leg of the tie where everything went wrong.

"Otherwise, now we would be talking about two Italian clubs in the semi-finals, and that would have been right."

Paddy Agnew

Furious...Buffon (in black) and his team-mates can not believe the referee has awarded Real Madrid a penalty in injury time



Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

FIFA only has itself to blame over 2026 scrap

With no one appearing to be overly thrilled with the contestants currently scrapping for the honour of hosting the 2026 World Cup, FIFA has only itself to blame. The scandalous 2018/2022 vote may have been eight years ago but the scars have not healed.

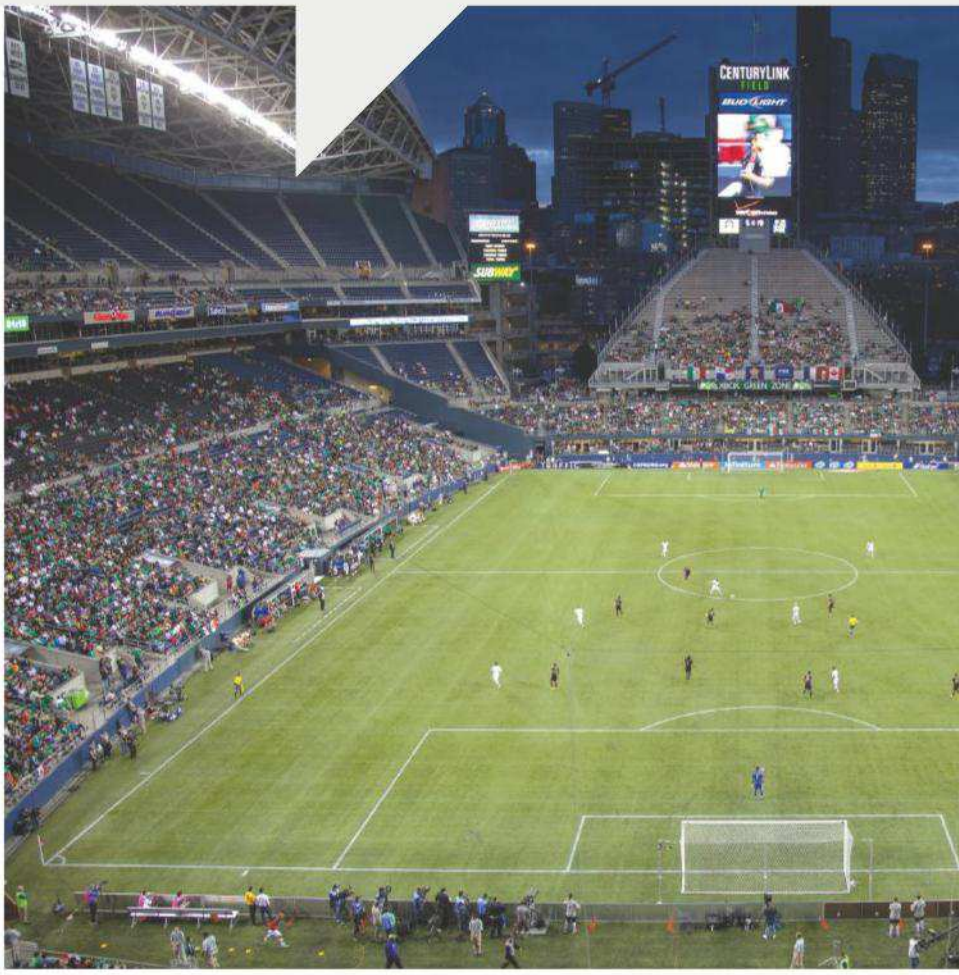
For a start, FIFA politics have trumped common sense. Putting together the vast bid book demands more time than the mere six months Morocco and the United (USA/Mexico/Canada) bids were given.

Then FIFA came up with an evaluation taskforce comprising five of Infantino's own appointees: joint deputy secretary-generals Marco Villiger and Zvonimir Boban, audit chair Tomaz Vesel, governance chair Mukul Mudgal and competitions committee delegate Ilco Gjorgioski. Their modus operandi and powers were even the subject of a rare bust-up in FIFA Council.

Late in April this taskforce was scheduled to visit the bidders, assess everything they found, and then award marks on a scale of nought to five across a range of nine infrastructural and revenue-related criteria. This is the part which scared the Moroccans, whose venue plans are still largely architects' projections.

How does one assess stadia which do not exist? If the riposte is that this did Qatar no harm, well...that was then and this is now.

United 2026 has everything upstanding and ready, with executive director John Kristick stating: "Our bid is founded on the power of unity of three nations coming together to stage what would be the largest-ever World Cup – the first with 48 teams and 80 matches – and thus establishing a blueprint to encourage co-hosting to encourage smaller countries to join their neighbours and bid in the future."



> "No stone will be left unturned and no vote will be taken for granted"
>
> John Kristick of the United bid

No new building is needed and stadia and airports are all in place – not that a similar boast quite carried the Olympic day for Los Angeles, which was bested by Paris in pursuit of the 2024 Games and walked away with the 2028 consolation instead.

"Nothing is being taken for granted," adds Kristick. "We expect the member associations to be looking at not only what's in the best interest of FIFA and of the World Cup just in 2026 but in the years ahead.

"No stone will be left unturned and no vote will be taken for granted."

Morocco cannot compete with a promise of $2billion ticketing revenue from stadia with an average capacity of 68,000. And no one needs to explain the attraction for FIFA and Infantino of a World Cup spread north, south, east and west across the vast continent of central and north America. But Morocco counters with the argument that its people, cities, towns and villages would "live" the World Cup in a way perhaps not experienced since Italy in 1990.

While multi-millionaire businessman and Moroccan bid chairman Moulay Hafid Elalamy may be a novice in the rarefied sphere of FIFA politics, CEO

Support...Ivorian migrants in Morocco watch the 2014 World Cup

United...Mexico play Canada in Seattle in 2013

Hicham El Amrani has years of experience in senior roles within the Asian and then African confederations.

Morocco is pitching for the finals for a fifth time and El Amrani says this bid is not only bigger but far better, with the proposal tied into a government strategy for national development. The plan accounts for $9bn of the $15bn budget, leaving $3bn to be drawn from private investment and real spend of "only" $3bn.

Morocco's solid record of security and expectations in terms of renewable energy and environmental protection tick the boxes of organisational competence and legacy. Then there is the time-zone convenience of prime-time TV in the lucrative European markets.

As El Amrani describes it, Morocco is "an Arab nation but also an African nation with a European heritage". It welcomes 11 million tourists a year so accommodation will not be an issue, and the compactness of the country is in stark contrast to the vast continental landscape painted by United.

To promote the project, Morocco 2026 bought perimeter advertising at a number of international friendlies in March, including Colombia v Australia in London and Peru v Iceland in Harrison, New Jersey.

Almost all of Africa would vote for Morocco, so would a couple of Caribbean islands and a solid minority from Europe – including France, Belgium, Portugal and, Spain – plus more Mediterranean nations and the Russian-influenced block.

This presupposes, however, that Morocco will get as far as the vote.

The great fear is that their proposal will fall foul of the FIFA taskforce. To that end, Moroccan FA chairman Fouzi Lekjaa has led a high-profile campaign of complaint about the process. They also believe that with the intended assistance of the "Trump factor" they might just amass the necessary 104 votes for a simple majority.

There is, however, one last trap. Such was the consternation amid the football family at the prospect of each vote being open to public scrutiny, FIFA has added the abstention option of "not for any of the above".

A heavy abstention vote could throw the process into chaos, killing both bids stone dead. Such an outcome would also kick off a new race in which Europe (England?) and Asia (China?) would be early favourites. WS

POSSIBLE HOST CITIES

UNITED 2026
(23 venues to be trimmed to 16)

Canada
Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto

Mexico
Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey

United States
Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New York/New Jersey, Orlando, Philadelphia, San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, Washington DC

Keen...Morocco announce their bid

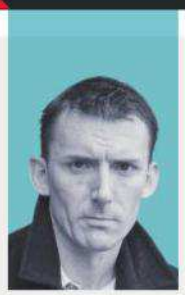
MOROCCO 2026
(14 venues)

New
Casablanca Grand Stade, Oujda, Tetouan

Redeveloped
Agadir, Fez, Marrakech Grand Stade, Rabat, Tangier

New modular (with temporary stands)
Casablanca II, El Jadida, Marrakech II, Meknes, Nador, Ouarzazate

Promotion...adverts at Australia's game against Colombia (in blue) in London



Jonathan WILSON

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Inside-forwards are the key to Premier League success

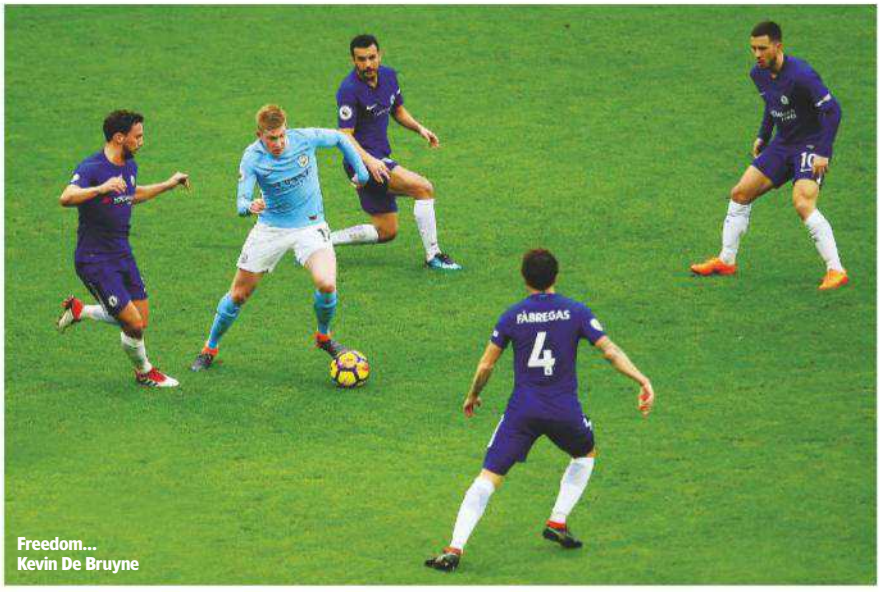
Last season, as Chelsea became the first team since Everton in 1962-63 to win the league playing with a back three, much of the focus was on how well David Luiz performed as a ball-playing centre-back with a defender either side of him, how effectively Cesar Azpilicueta shuffled across to close the space when Victor Moses went forward, and how N'Golo Kante and Nemanja Matic provided an effective shield.

None of that was untrue, but increasingly this season it has come to be seen that what was really important about that Chelsea side was what was going on at the other end of the pitch; that the solid defensive base was a means to an end.

With Eden Hazard on the left, and either Pedro or Willian on the right, what were effectively two inside-forwards thrived because the 3-4-2-1 set-up had them occupying pockets that lay outside the natural marking structure of an opponent: in that awkward zone outside and in front of the central defenders, inside the full-backs and outside the holding midfielder(s). Against a back three, they had the freedom to pull wide and attack the space behind the wing-backs.

The system was slightly restrictive in that the onus of creativity essentially lay on two players, but it was a neat resolution to the defensive need to maintain structure while avoiding the regimentation that can make attacks predictable.

It also presented a theoretical curiosity in that the best way to counter it seemed to be to match it shape for shape, so that the wing-backs cancelled out and the two holding midfielders picked up the two inside-forwards. It seemed to represent an evolutionary cul-de-sac, much as the W-M, which featured a similar square of two deep-lying and two creative midfielders, had become an immutable default in Britain between the late 1920s and the late 1950s.



Freedom... Kevin De Bruyne

> Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva are thriving in what the former has described as "free eight" roles

Chelsea boss Antonio Conte – perhaps mindful of how Tottenham Hotspur, aping his 3-4-2-1, had won 2-0 at White Hart Lane in January 2017 – tweaked his system for this season's league meeting at Wembley, using David Luiz in midfield as one of three holding midfielders between Tiemoue Bakayoko and Kante.

The idea, presumably, was to overwhelm Tottenham's inside-forwards Dele Alli and Christian Eriksen through weight of numbers – and to the extent that Chelsea ended up winning the game 2-1, it worked. Whether the tweak could be deemed a success on the run of play, however, is another issue.

What rationale has underlain Chelsea's transfer policy in recent years is far from clear, but it seems not unreasonable to think that the plan last summer was for Danny Drinkwater to replace Nemanja Matic as a controlling presence alongside Kante, with Bakayoko adding a more dynamic option so that he and Cesc Fabregas could be used to flank Kante in a midfield diamond with Hazard at its tip.

Perhaps that would have worked, but with neither Drinkwater nor Bakayoko really settling, the principle impact of Conte's change was to reduce Chelsea's creativity, making them extremely reliant on Hazard, whose switch into a more central area meant he was easier for opposing central midfielders to pick up. A vital strength of the previous season had been lost.

One of the reasons for Manchester City's dominance of the Premier League this term has been their exploitation of those inside-forward positions, with Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva thriving in what the former has described as "free eight" roles.

Accommodating inside-forwards in modern football isn't easy, given

Responsibility ...Fernandinho

it requires players attacking outside them both to offer a passing option and to occupy the opposing full-backs. It has always been the problem of 4-3-2-1 that without very attacking full-backs it becomes very narrow and relatively easy to combat by having your own full-backs tuck in.

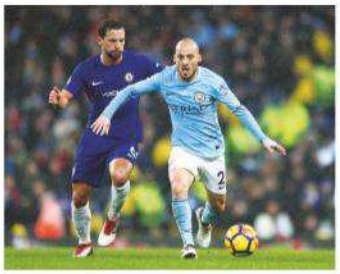
City have that width in Leroy Sane and Raheem Sterling, two natural wide men, but that in turn places huge pressure on the lone holding midfielder, Fernandinho. City get around that by occupying the channels in which an opposing inside-forward might operate with their own full-backs.

As at Bayern Munich, where he used Philipp Lahm and David Alaba for the purpose, Pep Guardiola has his full-backs, Kyle Walker and Fabian Delph, tuck in into what are effectively old-fashioned wing-half roles, with Fernandinho often dropping back between the two central defenders. At times, City therefore end up with what is effectively a W-M, or the same shape as Chelsea last season, except with wingers rather than wing-backs.

Questions remain about just how defensively secure the City system is, and a suspicion remains that if an opponent can get beyond the press they are vulnerable. But from an attacking point of view they have been sensational this season and will probably break the Premier League goalscoring record.

Chelsea, meanwhile, seem to have reverted to the old shape.

A change of personnel and a change of atmosphere, though, have killed the magic and it's City whose exploitation of the inside-forward positions has brought the league. WS



Top...David Silva goes past Danny Drinkwater

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

On the up... Diego junior (second left) with team-mates

1 MARADONA JUNIOR FOLLOWS IN FAMOUS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

The son of Diego Maradona, who goes by the same name, has taken his first tentative steps up the footballing ladder with promotion from the Italian sixth division.

Maradona junior plays for Afro-Napoli United, a club who were formed in 2009 to fight racism. The multi-racial team beat Neapolis 3-0 to win promotion to the fifth tier.

2 SKI JUMPING ONTO A FOOTBALL PITCH

At the recent Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korean officials managed to kill two birds with one stone when they designed the Alpensia Ski Jump arena – and used the landing area to build a new football ground for Gangwon.

With the South Korean skiing season running from November to March, and the football season from March to late November, games officials realised they could build a single 11,000-seater stadium to cater for both sports as the landing area for ski jumping is about the same dimensions as a standard-size football pitch.

Gangwon have played at five different locations since 2008, and while their new stadium is unique – with two ski ramps at one end – it is perhaps not in the most accessible of locations for the 50,000 population of Pyeongchang County where it is based.

3 PITCH ADJUSTMENT TO BEAT THE BIG FREEZE

A German third-tier game between Sportfreunde Lotte and Osnabruck managed to beat the big freeze that swept across Europe thanks to some quick thinking by referee Robert Kampa.

With one touchline frozen, the official decided to move the sideline in by a few metres. After sand was sprinkled on the frozen part of the unused playing surface, the game could start with a few minutes delay.

Osnabruck went on to win 3-2 with an injury-time winner from Tim Danneberg.

Moved...the pitch at Osnabruck

4 KEEPER CAUGHT SHORT

Armando Prisco, a 21-year-old goalkeeper with Italian fourth-tier side Messina, was sent off for urinating behind his goal during a derby game against Igea.

"I made a gesture as if I was just stretching because I knew that people were around and I didn't want people to think I was [urinating]," says Prisco, who was spotted by the referee.

"He took it a bit too personally. I was honest enough to tell him what happened and I don't think anyone else noticed."

The caught-short keeper added that, in future, he'll "try to hold it in – I'm not incontinent yet".

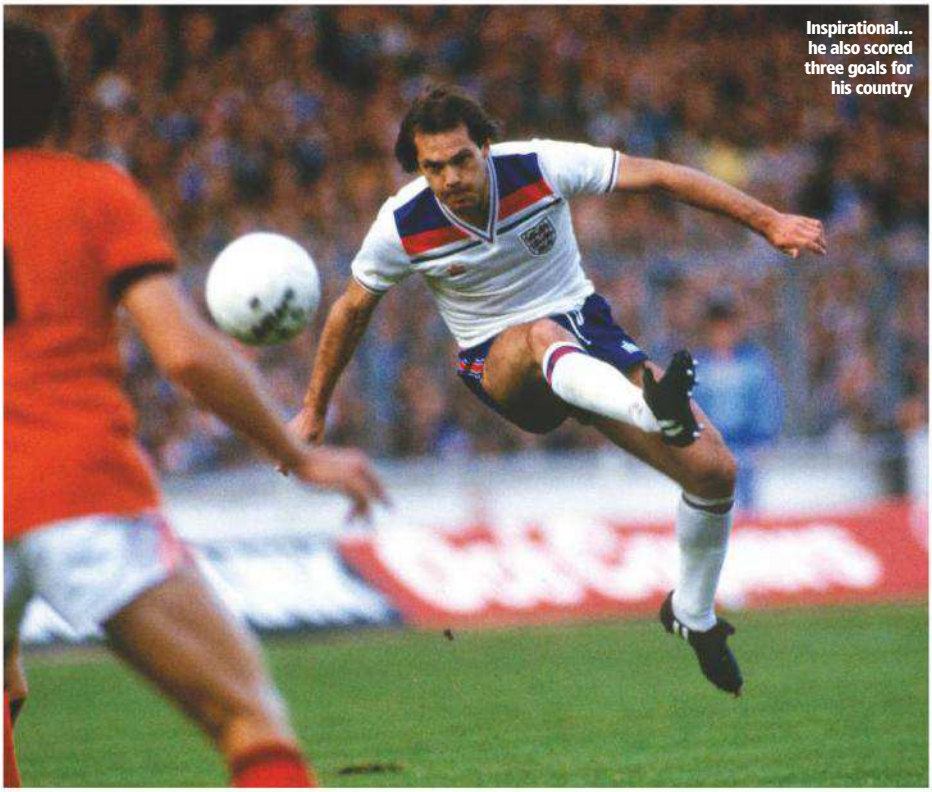
Off...Armando Prisco sees red

Ice view...the ski jump at Gangwon

"He always called me 'Big Stuff' and he called everyone else 'geezer'. His energy and brightness would light up any room"
Terry Butcher on ex-England team-mate Ray Wilkins

OBITUARIES

Ray WILKINS (1956-2018)



Inspirational... he also scored three goals for his country

A total of 84 England caps, between 1976 and 1986, was a measure of the quality and skill of Ray Wilkins at a time before the English game evolved into a less frantic style of football which would have suited him perfectly.

His death at 61 prompted heartfelt tributes not only from the clubs he played for but from a host of players who abandoned Twitter's conformist condolences to tell their personal tales of his humanity amid the hurly-burly.

Football was in the family genes, with father George playing professionally for four clubs and being followed into the game by his sons Ray, Graham, Dean and Stephen.

Ray, however, was the one with the star quality. He made his Chelsea debut in 1973, at 17, against Norwich and was named captain a year later by manager Eddie McCreadie. Two years later, Wilkins made his England debut under Don Revie, against Italy in New York, and in a decade-long international career he would captain his country 10 times. He also suffered the ignominy of being sent off for throwing the ball down in anger against Morocco at the 1986 World Cup.

Butch...Chelsea captain at 18

In 1979 ex-Chelsea boss Dave Sexton took him to Manchester United for £825,000 and a five-year stint was marked by a superb goal in the 1983 FA Cup victory over Brighton.

That proved his lone success before joining Milan for a British record £1.5m, and three years in Italy, followed by six months in France with Paris Saint-Germain, earned a wealth of respect but no trophies. That was rectified in Scotland with Rangers, where he won two league titles and the League Cup. Subsequently he wound down his career back in England – barring a short stint at Hibernian - with Queens Park Rangers, Crystal Palace, Wycombe Wanderers and Leyton Orient, before managerial spells with QPR and Fulham.

Back at Chelsea he was assistant manager to double-winning boss Carlo Ancelotti, who later said: "Without Ray we wouldn't have won a thing."

Later on, regular appearances on TV and radio ensured Wilkins' insight and humour were always worth attention.

Keir Radnedge

Rene HOUSEMAN (1953-2018)

Rene Orlando Houseman burst on the international scene at the 1974 World Cup finals and was a winner four years later under Cesar Luis Menotti.

However, distracted by alcohol, and then outshone by Mario Kempes and subsequently Diego Maradona, he never quite fulfilled his teenage talent.

Menotti once described Houseman at his best as a mixture of Argentinian hero Omar Corbatta and Brazil's Garrincha. Like them he had been raised in poverty yet he never looked back with regret, saying: "I was a happy kid who did not lack anything. I spent the whole day kicking a ball against a wall."

As for his breakthrough, Houseman recalled: "When I was 14 I had a trial with Defensores, one of our two local clubs. The coaches watched me for 15 minutes then told me to take a shower. I was devastated. I thought I'd blown it. But when I left the dressing rooms they were waiting for me with papers to sign."

In 1972 Houseman joined Huracan and gave his first pay packet to friends and family, saying: "How could I do anything else? They used to give me a plate of food when I did not even have a cup of milk." Alcohol took an ever greater hold as he stumbled from Huracan to River Plate and on to Australia, South Africa and Chile before brief spells back home with Independiente and local Excursionistas.

Keir Radnedge

Talent...Rene Houseman

"Jiangsu was my last experience in football"

Fabio Capello tells Italian radio that he is not interested in coaching Italy's national team after leaving Chinese club Jiangsu Suning

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

World Cup boss ...Akira Nishino

Interim...Horst Hrubesch

EUROPE

HORST HRUBESCH, who was a European champion and World Cup runner-up as a player, took interim control of the German women's team after Steffi Jones' sacking.

CONCACAF

Swedish striker **ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC** joined MLS side LA Galaxy after being released by Manchester United.

AFRICA

Seychelles appointed **GAVIN JEANNE** as national coach.

ASIA

Japan replaced national coach Vahid Halilhodzic with technical director **AKIRA NISHINO**.

Romanian **COSMIN OLAROIU** took over from Fabio Capello as coach of Chinese Super League side Jiangsu Suning, while **BERND SCHUSTER**, who led Real Madrid to the 2008 La Liga title, replaced Ma Lin at Dalian Yifang.

Gone... Eusebio Sacristan

Eusebio leaves Sociedad

Real Sociedad parted company with **EUSEBIO SACRISTAN**. The former Barcelona B boss had led Sociedad to sixth and 12th place finishes since taking over from David Moyes in November 2015.

OUT

Quit...Paul Okon

EUROPE

West Bromwich Albion manager **ALAN PARDEW** agreed to leave the club after eight successive defeats in the Premier League.

OSCAR GARCIA left Olympiakos after less than three months in charge with the side third in the Greek Superleague.

AFRICA

Former Nigeria international **EMMANUEL AMUNIKE** left his post as coach of Sudanese club SC Khartoum by mutual consent.

Frenchman **SEBASTIEN MIGNE** parted company with Congo four days after winning his first game as coach of the national side, having had 12 months and seven games in charge.

ASIA

Four months after leading Urawa Red Diamonds to the Asian Champions League title, coach **TAKAFUMI HORI** was sacked by the club after they failed to win any of their opening five games of this season's J.League.

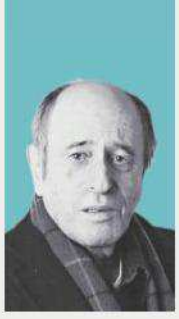
PAUL OKON quit as coach of the A-League's Central Coast Mariners.

OCEANIA

DAVID CHUNG resigned as president of the Oceania Football Confederation.

Star...Zlatan Ibrahimovic swapped the Premier League for MLS

Failing... Takafumi Hori



Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Honour...Chelsea and West Ham pay tribute

Remembering Ray Wilkins: a decent and generous man

Ray Wilkins was given a touching send-off at Stamford Bridge before the recent London derby match against West Ham United. I was fortunate enough to see most of his 84 England games, and still remember the first of them, which took place in the Yankee Stadium in New York.

A strong Italy team led 2-0 at half-time, only for a largely young England side, with Wilkins impressively prominent, to turn the tables in the second half and go on to win 3-2.

He was a precocious teenaged captain of Chelsea, already much respected by players older than himself. In 1984 he and the England centre-forward Mark Hateley transferred to Milan.

I remember offering to help him learn Italian. It didn't happen, but when later I encountered him before an England game, he lamented, "Bloody difficult your Italian, Brian." But he still succeeded in coping with it.

His father, George Wilkins, was an inside-right who played for Brentford. As a 10-year-old I saw him play at Wembley in a wartime 1942 London Cup Final against Portsmouth, which included seven of the players who two years earlier had thrashed the favourites Wolves in the FA Cup Final. Two goals by England left-winger Leslie Smith gave Brentford an unexpected victory that day; the one major tournament ever won by the Bees.

Wembley was the scene of a spectacular goal shot from outside the box by Ray Wilkins in an FA Cup Final against Brighton in 1983. It ended in a 2-2 draw with the underdogs Brighton throwing away the easiest of chances to win the game close to its end. United and Wilkins strolled through the replay 4-0.

As time went by, Wilkins' repertoire became increasingly and mysteriously limited. His passing when it was not lateral was backwards rather than forwards. Things came to something of a crisis in the 1986 World Cup in Mexico.

Transfer...with Milan

After a pedestrian display against Morocco, he tossed the ball towards the referee in an uncharacteristic moment and was expelled. Wilkins would win further caps, but the end of his international career was in sight.

Later on he would play successfully for Rangers, manage QPR and deeply impress Carlo Ancelotti when he worked alongside him at Chelsea.

His last days were deeply sad. If he had been drinking heavily, you do wonder what sadness had brought it to come about. Always decent, generous and modest, he surely deserved so much better than such a sad and painful death.

Everyone will miss him who knew him.

Southgate has more options than he thinks

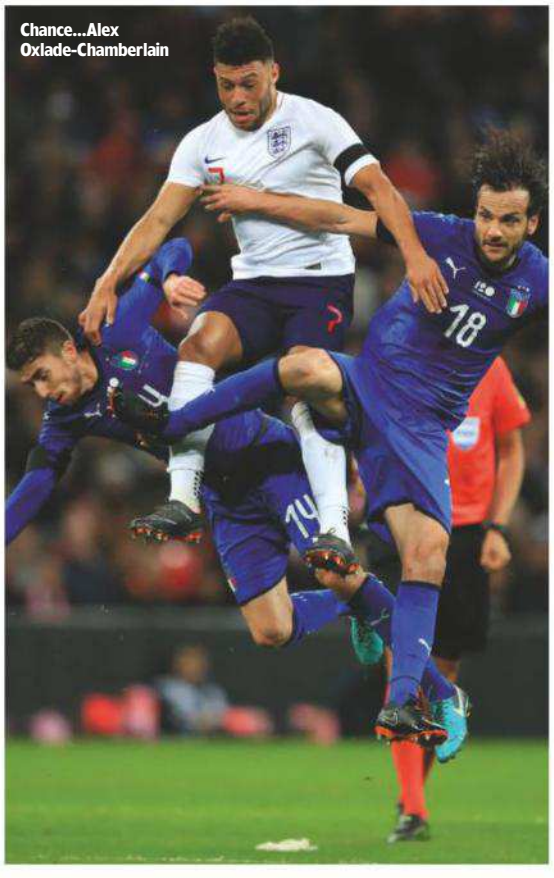
We read here and there that the England manager Gareth Southgate has already made up his mind over the bulk of the players he will take to Russia. I'd like to think that he will hold his horses and look at certain candidates who are arguably putting themselves forward as the season draws to a close.

One would like to think that Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain is among them. If not, he surely should be. Since his transfer from Arsenal he has been moved from the right wing into central midfield, where he wants to play, and the results have been substantial. He is fast, he is strong, he can make goals – and as Manchester City have recently seen to their coast he can score them.

A place in the England party should arguably go to Newcastle United's Jonjo Shelvey, who has recently struck such impressive midfield form and galvanised the attack of a Newcastle team which for many weeks seemed doomed to relegation. He won half a dozen caps with Liverpool and Swansea but that is well in the past, and although there have been doubts about his temperament – he was sent off early this season – of late he has been successfully orchestrating a Newcastle team which seems to have won its way out of trouble.

Should Jack Wilshere be on the trip? I still think he should as his passing is so far above the general standard of the Premiership. At the time of writing his future at Arsenal still seems in the balance since he has rejected a diminished contract.

If Arsenal stand firm it will mean that come the summer they will lose him for nothing as his contract will have run out. Simply in terms of pounds, shillings and pence it would surely make sense to renew his contract, which is far less lucrative than the colossal £300,000 per week now paid to Ozil.



Chance...Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain

An England World Cup boycott would be worthless

The idea that England should withdraw from the coming World Cup in Russia has always seemed absurd to me. If England did withdraw, be sure that some of the previously eliminated teams would take its place. And for all the murderous corruption of the Kremlin government at least the country has a football tradition.

It bought this World Cup? Sure, but so did South Africa, Germany and putrescent little Qatar, which has no football tradition at all and has even got the tournament switched to the European winter, thus causing chaos to European club competitions.

Atkinson highlights English inadequacies

Keith Hackett, in his weekly newspaper column, continues to dish out his strictures on referees without fear or favour. The latest to come within his sights and to be roundly excoriated is none other than Martin Atkinson, after his debatable refereeing of the match between Manchester City and Manchester United.

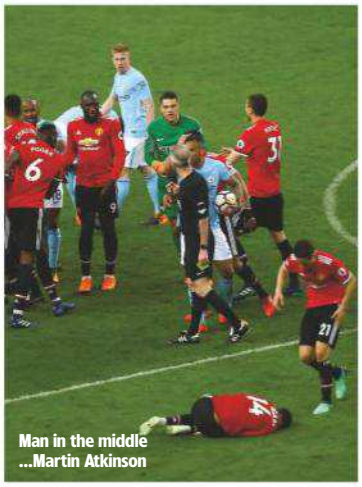
No wonder, Hackett opines, if England have no referees at the incipient World Cup when Atkinson is arguably the best of them.

Hackett wrote: "There were moments in the Manchester derby when he completely lost control."

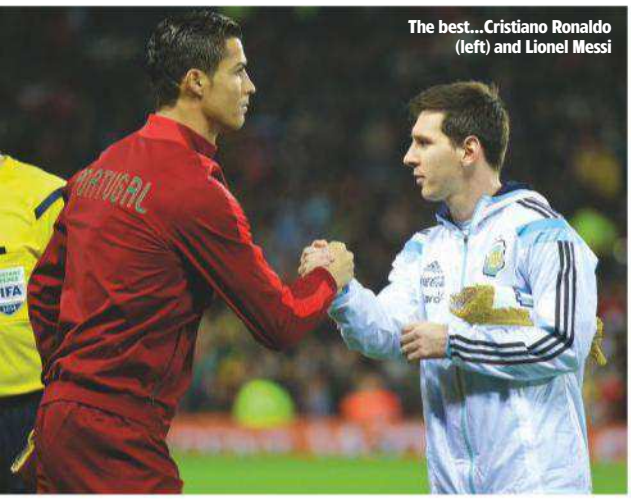
United's Ashley Young, says Hackett, was lucky not to give away a penalty for handling in the first half. Worse still, in the penalty box in the second half his challenge on City's Sergio Aguero, was "reckless, out of control and a foul that endangered the opposing player".

City's Fernandinho, thought Hackett, would also have seen a red card for his foul on Jesse Lingard. The punishment was limited to a yellow card.

Quite a list of inadequacies.



Man in the middle ...Martin Atkinson



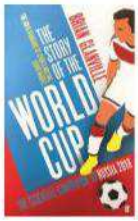
The best...Cristiano Ronaldo (left) and Lionel Messi

Ronaldo puts his case once again

The stupendous bicycle kick goal scored by Cristiano Ronaldo for Real Madrid against Juventus in the Champions Cup helps surely to make him the world's best player, even ahead of Lionel Messi.

Arguably when it comes to World Cups, Messi may have the stronger case, even if in the last World Cup it ended for him in bitter anticlimax. So much so that after the Final, he sat on the ground wholly uninterested in the fact that he had just been named as the best player in the tournament. It is arguable that he was thought, by the time it came to the Final itself, to be plainly exhausted.

They are two marvellous players with contrasting styles. Ronaldo so explosive and acrobatic, Messi so subtle and elusive. At the moment, neither Ronaldo's Portugal nor Messi's Argentina seems likely to win the World Cup. But either retains the capacity to win games which would otherwise seem to be out of reach.



● A new edition of Brian Glanville's book, *The Story of the World Cup: 2018*, is published by Faber & Faber (£15.99)

FEATURED STORY

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FEATURED STORY

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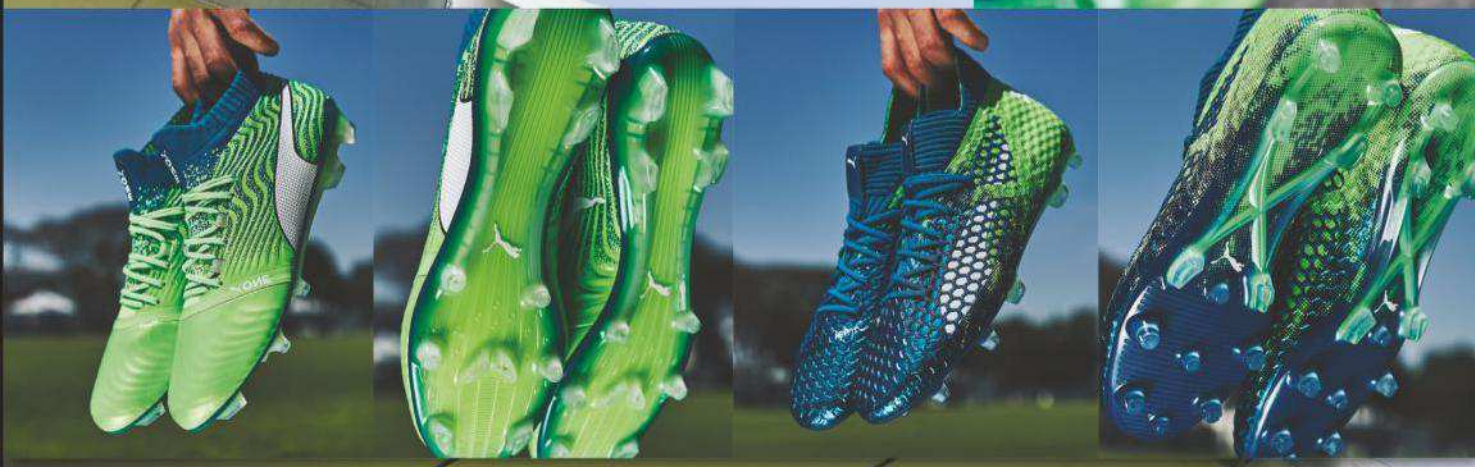

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Roma re-write the rules

Di Francesco's side defied the odds against Barcelona

In the white-hot heat of the extraordinary night on which they eliminated Lionel Messi and Barcelona in their quarter-final clash, there were several key men for Roma, but none more so than Eusebio Di Francesco. Much has been said of the coach's attacking 3-4-1-2 line-up against Barca, but as much as anything it was the his ability to motivate the squad that made victory possible, convincing the players that a second-leg comeback was a serious possibility.

When asked if his side's victory was also an important win for Italian football, Di Francesco replied: "It was an important win for us, and it doesn't stop here. We're on the road to Kiev – I believe in that just as I believed in this win."

At the beginning of the season few could have imagined Roma making the final four of a competition in which their recent form has not been great. Knocked out in the pre-group qualifiers by Porto last season, comprehensively beaten 4-0 by Real Madrid in the second round the year before, and thrashed 7-1 at home by Bayern Munich three seasons ago.

With a new coach and a summer transfer campaign that was nothing to write home about, there were plenty of reasons to be sceptical.

Early-season losses to Inter and Napoli confirmed that scepticism, but a three-week period in early November – marked by a 3-0 win against Chelsea in the Champions League and Serie A victories against Fiorentina and then Lazio in the Rome derby – strongly suggested that Di Francesco was getting his act together.

Despite a 1-0 loss to Juventus in Turin in December, the club were third in Serie A, behind Napoli and Juventus, by Christmas and had won their Champions League group.

Since the turn of the year, notwithstanding 2-0 home defeats by Milan and Fiorentina, Roma's form has held steady, with a 4-2 win at Napoli in early March perhaps an indication of what was to come.

Arguably, no player has been more fundamental to Roma's excellent season than their Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko. Not only has he scored six goals in the Champions League but his ability to win the ball in midfield, hold on to it and then distribute it intelligently makes him invaluable.

At 6ft 4in, Dzeko has always made full use of his height to create problems in the air. But over the last two seasons, after an indifferent start in his first year in Rome, his renewed self-belief has found full expression in the quality of his play with the ball on the ground.

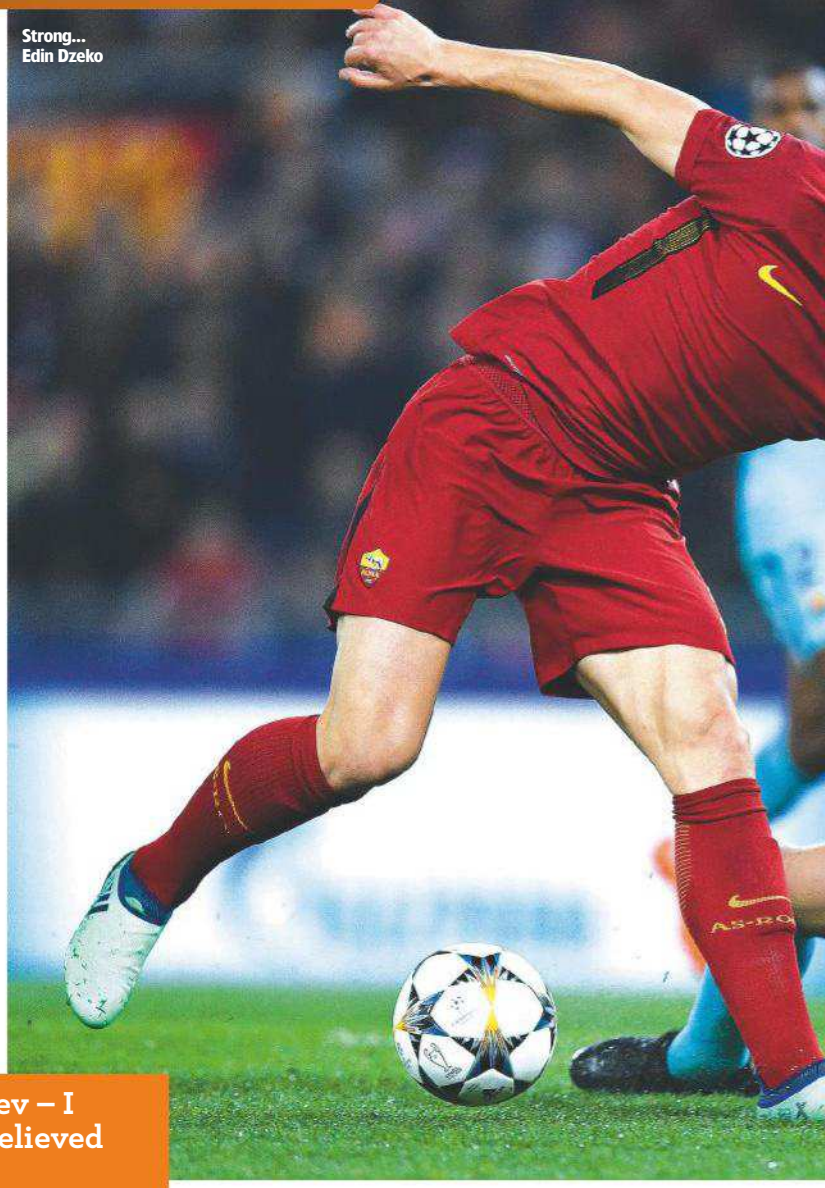
When Roma's new sports director, Ramon Rodriguez Verdejo, otherwise known as Monchi, signed Serb defender Aleksandar Kolarov from Manchester City in July for €5million, not every *Romanista* was happy.

Brought in to replace the injured Emerson Palmieri, Kolarov had played three very successful seasons at Lazio prior to his seven-year stint at City – and that isn't something that endears a player to the Roma faithful. And in an era in which Serie A can sometimes feel like a retirement home for ageing Premier League players, many critics wondered just how much gas the 31-year-old still had in the tank. The fans, however, need not have worried, and Kolarov's form has been so good that Emerson was allowed to leave for Chelsea in January.

Monchi was also behind the signing of 20-year-old Cengiz Under from Basaksehir of Istanbul for €15m. If few fans had a clear idea of who he was, that had changed by February as he scored five times at home in Serie A, not to mention getting a goal against Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League.

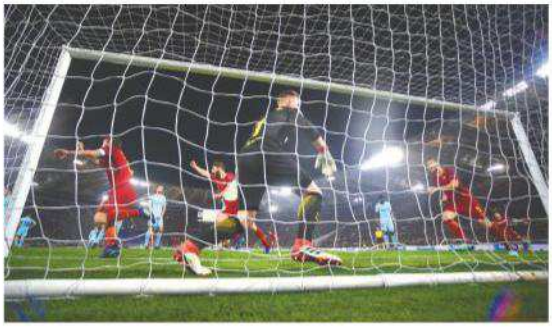
Cengiz's explosion onto the scene was all the more important

> "We're on the road to Kiev – I believe in that just as I believed in this win"
>
> Eusebio Di Francesco, after beating Barcelona



Strong... Edin Dzeko

Celebration...scenes after that dramatic victory over Barca



Winner...keeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen is beaten as Roma make it 3-0

Preview

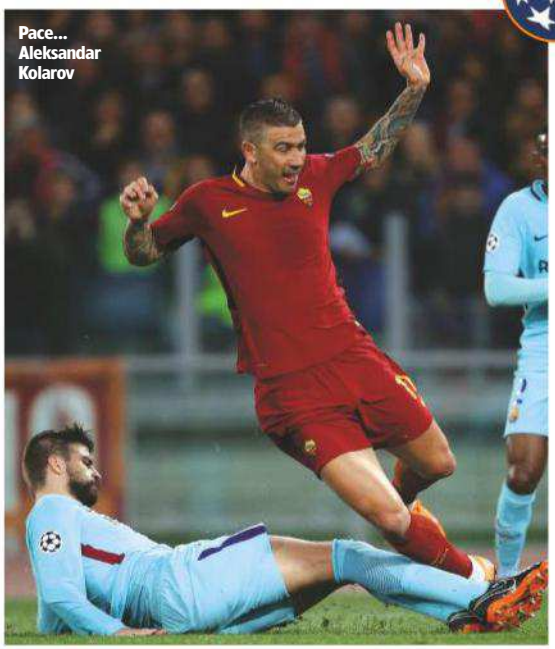
Mastermind... Eusebio Di Francesco

since it came at a moment when Roma seemed to have temporarily lost their way, dropping to fifth in the league.

It should be noted too that Roma's second-leg win over Barcelona was, in many ways, a very "non-Italian" performance, with 90 minutes of fierce running. Head down and all heart was certainly not the way Roma, guided by the majestic Francesco Totti over the years, used to play. But, greatly helped by Dzeko, Kolarov and others, Di Francesco's team pulled it off.

Are there more surprises in his box?

Paddy Agnew



Pace... Aleksandar Kolarov

Roma - The Key Figures

Impressing
Bosnian striker **Edin Dzeko** was clearly Roma's outstanding player on the night of the 3-0 defeat of Barcelona. Dutch midfielder **Kevin Strootman** and experienced captain **Daniele De Rossi** form the combative heart of an excellent midfield.

Improving
The attacking pace of **Aleksandar Kolarov** down the left flank is key. His huge experience at left-back and his ability to knock in excellent cross after cross have made him a key element in Eusebio Di Francesco's set-up.

Emerging
Fast, intelligent and keen to learn, **Cengiz Under** arrived last summer, ostensibly as the replacement for Mo Salah. He is equipped with serious sharp-shooting skills allied to an uncanny ability to fool a rival defender with an unexpected, seemingly unprepared shot.

Missing
Belgian midfielder Radja Nainggolan is returning from injury.

How they line up
Right-back Alessandro Florenzi, who is now back in the side after injury, and Kolarov on the opposite flank provide the springboard for much of Roma's play, while Federico Fazio and Kostas Manolas combine to form a solid, central-defensive partnership. Up front, Di Francesco can choose from Stephan El Shaarawy, Diego Perotti and Cengiz to partner Dzeko, or leave the Bosnian to go it alone.

Anfield redemption

Klopp and Salah reclaim the winning feeling

The 5-1 aggregate scoreline did not tell the full story of Liverpool's sensational quarter-final triumph over a Manchester City side that had streamrollered its way to the brink of the Premier League title. Liverpool did not dominate for 180 minutes, but they raised their game for critical periods during the two legs. The margins were fine – Leroy Sane's disallowed goal in first-half stoppage time of the second leg was not offside – but they were exploited to the max by Jurgen Klopp's side.

Fortune favoured the brave; where other clubs had sat back and tried to contain City, Liverpool were bold enough to press City in the first leg at Anfield, where the vibrant atmosphere recalled the very best of the club's past European triumphs.

"If they want the ball from you they have to kill you," said Klopp. "We are in the semis so we deserve it. It's not about perfection, it's about the result, the character, the mentality, really fighting for the result.

"I really think they [City] are the best team in the world at the moment, but I knew we could beat them. We completely deserve to be in the semi-finals."

City boss Pep Guardiola was sent to the stand after confronting Spanish ref Antonio Mateu Lahoz at half-time following Sane's disallowed goal. Klopp responded: "You can imagine Pep was not happy but we've scored five goals against Man City and only conceded one. These numbers are usually not possible.

"We are now in the semis and first of all we should enjoy the moment because it's obviously a while ago that Liverpool were in the semis. It was a while ago that I was in the semis!"

Mindset... Jurgen Klopp

Klopp's team are unbeaten in this Champions League campaign, which began in August with a 2-1 win in Hoffenheim in the first leg of the final qualifying round. The draw for the group stage was favourable, pitting them against Sevilla, Spartak Moscow and Maribor. But the early signs

Prolific... Mohamed Salah

were that Klopp would struggle to repeat his run with Borussia Dortmund to the 2013 Final. Indeed, the first night of the group stage ended in anti-climax when Sevilla, by taking an early lead and then recovering with a second-half equaliser to level at 2-2, spoiled the Anfield party.

There were plenty of goals through the autumn – seven away to Maribor – but defensive frailties were exposed in Seville when Klopp's men raced to a three-goal first-half lead only to throw it all away.

Far from inhibiting Liverpool's attack, January's protracted departure of Philippe Coutinho for a club record fee invigorated the dynamic triumvirate of Sadio Mane, Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah – and the trio were all on target as Porto were swept aside in the round of 16, with Liverpool's 5-0 victory the heaviest European home defeat ever suffered by the Portuguese side.

> "It's not about perfection, it's about the result, the character, the mentality"
>
> Jurgen Klopp

Credit has to go to Klopp for addressing the defensive frailties with the signing of Virgil Van Dijk, an expensive move but one that has also raised the performance levels of defensive partner Dejan Lovren.

The £142million fee for the Brazilian was not only a huge return on the £8.5m the club paid to Internazionale in 2013, it also released the cash for Van Dijk and midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain. Indeed, this season's deals have placed Liverpool's transfer balance firmly in the black, even including the £35m paid to Roma for Salah.

Klopp's readiness and ability to blood youngsters (Trent Alexander-Arnold) and work with existing players (Lovren) has also contributed to the transfer surplus.

There is much more to Klopp than the showman with the rock-star persona. The German "gets" Liverpool and has taken time to understand the city's unique mindset. Politically, he is in tune with Merseysiders, who bucked the national trend by voting by a majority to remain in the European Union.

"If I have a problem in a family, if I have a problem somewhere, then I stay in the family, stay in the club and sort the problem," he told *The Daily Telegraph*.

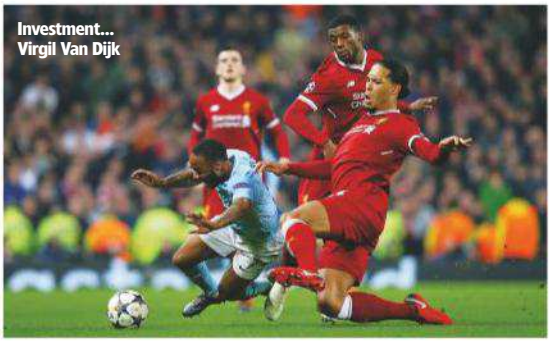
"There were hard times in the last two years in the EU with Greece, countries in southern Europe really struggling financially, then refugees because of the crisis in Syria. But that's a problem for all people. Let's sort it together."

While Klopp has connected with the soul of Liverpool, so the brilliant Salah has won the hearts and minds of fans who have delighted in his goalscoring exploits. Leading the ESM Golden Shoe rankings, the Egyptian is on course to break the stranglehold on the award exerted by La Liga's Messi, Suarez and Ronaldo over the past decade.

The irony is that Salah's success could yet prompt Barcelona to try to tempt another Liverpool star to Spain. But Liverpool under Klopp appear more than comfortable in their own skin to not be distracted by such matters. For the time being, the Champions League semi-finals await.

Not a situation that currently troubles Barca.

Gavin Hamilton


Investment... Virgil Van Dijk

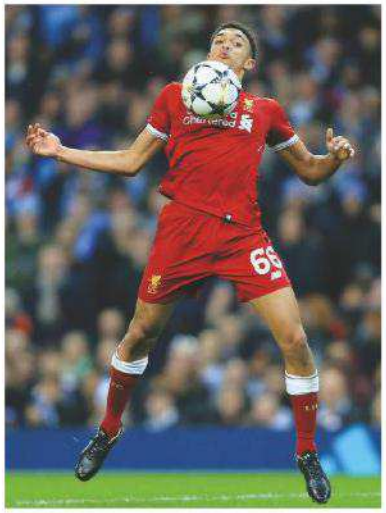
Liverpool: the key figures

Impressing

Mo Salah has been the revelation of the English season, threatening to break all goalscoring records while playing in a wide attacking role. Dutch centre-back **Virgil Van Dijk** became the world's most expensive defender when he joined form Southampton in January. **Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain** has thrived in his preferred central midfield role since a move from Arsenal.

Emerging

Liverpool-born academy graduate **Trent Alexander-Arnold** has broken through at right-back in the absence of Nathaniel Clyne. On the other flank, **Andrew Robertson**, signed for from Hull City last summer, has been an energetic presence. Versatile defender **Joe Gomez** has played his way into contention for England's World Cup squad.


Graduate...Trent Alexander-Arnold

Improving

Croatian defender **Dejan Lovren** has seemed a new player alongside new arrival Van Dijk. Keeper **Loris Karius** has been re-established as number one ahead of Simon Mignolet

Missing

Adam Lallana looks to have suffered a season-ending injury in March. **Nathaniel Clyne** has missed most of the campaign with a back injury. **Emre Can** has been troubled by a back problem.

Tactics

Klopp's heavy pressing formation easily switches from 4-1-4-1 to a 4-3-3 when Salah and Mane press high up the pitch and break with speed to join central attacker Firmino. He switched to 4-5-1 to tackle Man City in the quarter-finals.

Jupp at the double

Heynckes sets his sights on the Champions League after wrapping up another Bundelisga title

It's going to need the footballing equivalent of hell freezing over to put an end to Bayern Munich's total domination of the Bundesliga. The all-conquering Bavarians wrapped up their sixth successive German title with a 4-1 win at Augsburg in April, the weekend before they eased past Sevilla and into the Champions League semi-finals.

Given FCB's vastly superior player pool and financial resources, the chasm which separates them and the rest of the country is unlikely to be closed any time soon.

And after wrapping up the domestic title, Heynckes' thoughts quickly turned to the Champions League. "It would be a sensation if we won the Champions League," he told Kicker magazine. "It's part of the Bayern DNA to always aim for the biggest prizes. That's what we have to go for. Will we succeed? I don't know. Let's wait and see.

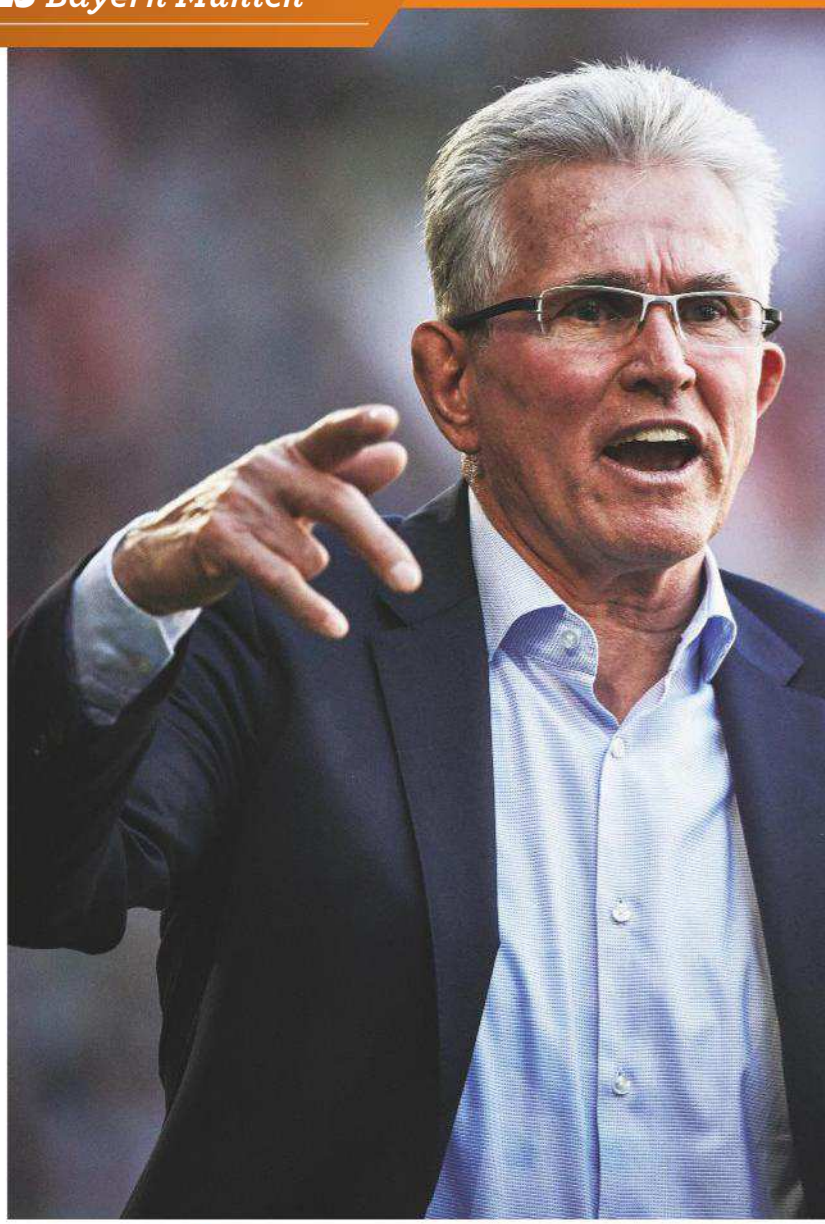
"I tell the boys that we have to have the best possible team spirit. Without that we have no chance. We have to work together as well as we can. There can be no room for egos."

Looking ahead to the semi-finals, Heynckes says: "Naturally we're ambitious and driven. We aim to get to the Final. But first we have two difficult encounters to get through. You need a little luck, the right refereeing decisions and good form on the day.

"The good thing for us is that none of our players will be suspended. That's very important."

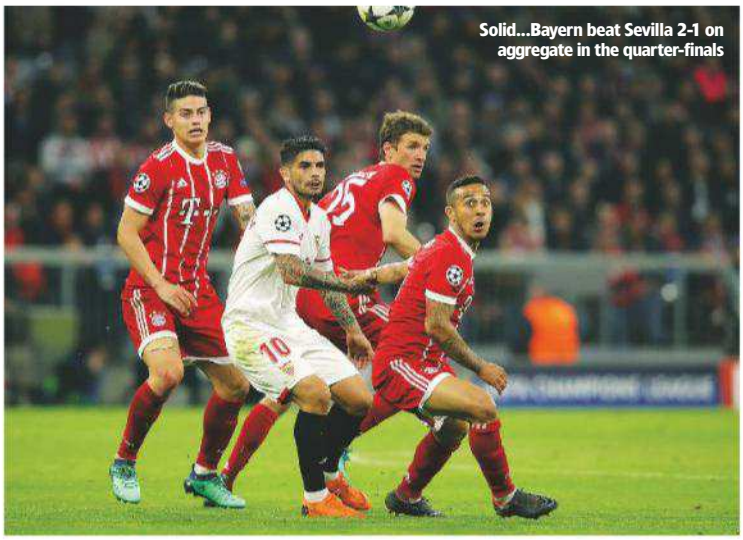
Too confident, masterful and slick to be denied, Bayern effectively had the domestic title won months ago. At the winter break they were nine points clear at the top of the table and they were only going to stretch it further in the New Year.

That said, Bayern have not always been in cruise control this season. Early in the campaign, with Carlo Ancelotti in charge, the men in red-and-white stripes were not in rude health. They were stale and predictable in their approach play, dysfunctional defensively and many of their squad were openly rebelling against the coach.



Interim...Jupp Heynckes took control in October

> **"It's part of the Bayern DNA to always aim for the biggest prizes. That's what we have to go for... there can be no room for egos"**
>
> Jupp Heynckes



Solid...Bayern beat Sevilla 2-1 on aggregate in the quarter-finals

When push came to shove, Ancelotti had to be paid off. Not only had his side lost faith in him, results were terrible too – with a humiliating 3-0 drubbing by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League and their worst start to a Bundesliga campaign in seven years (13 points from their first six games).

What was required at this point was a sustained programme of back to Bayern basics, and since taking over from "Carletto" in October, interim boss Heynckes certainly has provided it.

With greater emphasis on back-line organisation and physical conditioning, an obsessive attention to detail and more open lines of communication, Heynckes has infused the players with his hunger for victories. At the drop of a hat, he has turned Bayern into a team again.

Talk about the Heynckes effect. Bayern were five points behind league leaders Borussia Dortmund when he arrived last autumn. Within three weeks, the tables were turned and FCB

Preview

had 21 points more than the *Schwarz-Gelben* when they clinched the title.

Heynckes, now 72 years of age and in his fourth spell at the Bayern controls, might be in elder-statesman territory, but he remains the ultimate competitive animal. In his playing days as a striker for Borussia Monchengladbach he would react to a defeat by sulking for days. He found it impossible to live with losses then – and he still does today.

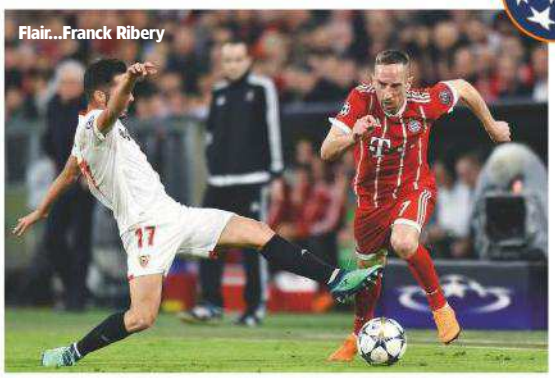
With Heynckes continuing to insist that his caretaking duties at Bayern will draw to a close at the end of the season, speculation about his successor continues to feverishly fill the column-inches and airwaves.

The favourite for the Allianz-Arena job is Eintracht Frankfurt coach Niko Kovac - who spent several years battling as though his life depended on it in the Bayern midfield. Nice's Swiss coach Lucien Favre, who was a team-mate of Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge at Servette in Geneva many moons ago, also reported to be under consideration.

Favre's favoured possession game would suit Bayern very well, with Kovac's more up-and at-'em style less so. According to Rummenigge, a relevant announcement will be made at the end of April.

Nick Bidwell

Mature...Joshua Kimmich



Flair...Franck Ribery

Bayern: the key figures

Impressing

Ever-prolific Polish striker **Robert Lewandowski** has already racked up 70 goals in the Champions League for Bayern and his previous club, Borussia Dortmund. Although in the autumn of his career, 35-year-old French left-winger **Franck Ribery** has lost none of his flair, vibrancy and sheer cheek. In **Mats Hummels** the Bavarians have a defensive leader of the highest order and a centre-back exuding authority, toughness and elegance.

Emerging

Marauding young right-back **Joshua Kimmich**, who is still in his early 20s, is so mature and tactically intelligent despite his young years and is will-to-win personified. When a coach of Jupp Heynckes' experience predicts a "world-class" future for the up-and-coming ex-Hoffenheim centre-back **Niklas Sule**, it is worth taking note. Outstanding French box-to-box midfield man **Corentin Tolisso**, signed from Lyon last year, has been working hard on his shooting in training... and it shows.

Improving

Stand-in keeper **Sven Ulreich** has done a fine job of deputising for injured skipper Manuel Neuer. On loan from Real Madrid, Colombian midfield ace **James Rodriguez** has taken his all-round game to a new, higher level in Munich, and is far more consistent, visionary and versatile.

Missing

French winger **Kingsley Coman** is potentially out for the rest of the season after partially tearing ankle ligaments in late February. After missing most of the current campaign with a broken foot, **Manuel Neuer** is training again but not yet matchday operational. Austrian left-back **David Alaba** has been suffering with a back problem.

How they line up

Ever since Jupp Heynckes took over from Carlo Ancelotti last autumn, Bayern have played with much greater intensity, pressing opponents high and early. With Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery in the side, incisive wing-play comes as standard – as does a wide palette of well-rehearsed set-piece routines.

The elixir of Europe

The European Cup defines the 12-times champions

By the time Cristiano Ronaldo ran up to take the penalty against Juventus in the quarter-final second leg, he had been standing there waiting amid the madness and the noise for four and a half minutes and the stadium clock showed 97.66 – or it would have done, but for the fact that they're forced to stop on 90.00.

Madrid, 3-0 winners in the first leg, were on edge, the game heading into extra time, where another away goal for Juventus would probably have ended it, completing an incredible comeback and knocking out the champions. Or maybe penalties would await. As it turned out, one penalty did await.

Ronaldo admitted that his heart rate went up, that he had to calm himself down, but he showed no nerves. Running up, he smashed the ball high into the top corner and Madrid into the semi-final – for the eighth year in a row.

"From panic to the semi-final" one headline ran. For almost two hours, there had been fear. But now, suddenly, it had gone; now Madrid were through. And no sooner had the fear gone, than it felt daft that it had ever been there at all. It felt somehow inevitable that Madrid would go through. Easy to say after the event of course, and the suffering had been real, but it was true. They had been warned that what happened to Barcelona could happen to them, and it was mighty close, but in the end it didn't. It was never going to.

There is something about Real Madrid that means, somehow, it's hard to escape the feeling that they will survive, that they will progress. As one paper put it: "Juventus forgot that you have to kill Madrid six times."

> **"I don't know what it is about Madrid, but when you pull on that shirt you become like a mini Incredible Hulk"**
>
> Ex-Real midfielder Michel

The idea of team's name being "on the cup" is not a new concept of course, and nor is it a foolproof one. Plenty of teams with their names on cups have not won them. But it does play a part, even if only at some subconscious level: intangible, incalculable, inexplicable, but it is there.

Madrid's name has been on this cup more times than anyone else: 12 in total, two in a row, and three in four years. They have often been on edge – in three quarter-finals in a row they have lost one of the two games. In the 2014 Final, Sergio Ramos equalised in the 93rd minute. Two years later, they needed penalties. The year after that, Juventus scored a wonderful equaliser and took a big step forward in Cardiff. This season, PSG were on top for half an hour before Madrid scored twice. Here, Juventus had done it too. But Madrid won them all.

Penalty... Lucas Vazquez is fouled

Flexible...coach Zinedine Zidane

In a season in which they relinquished the Spanish title months in advance, they were on course for a third European Cup in a row. They had knocked out Juve days after slipping to fourth in the league.

They believe; but just as importantly, opponents can't help believing it too. The former Madrid midfielder Michel, who never actually won the European Cup, once said: "I don't know what it is about Madrid, but when you pull on that shirt you become

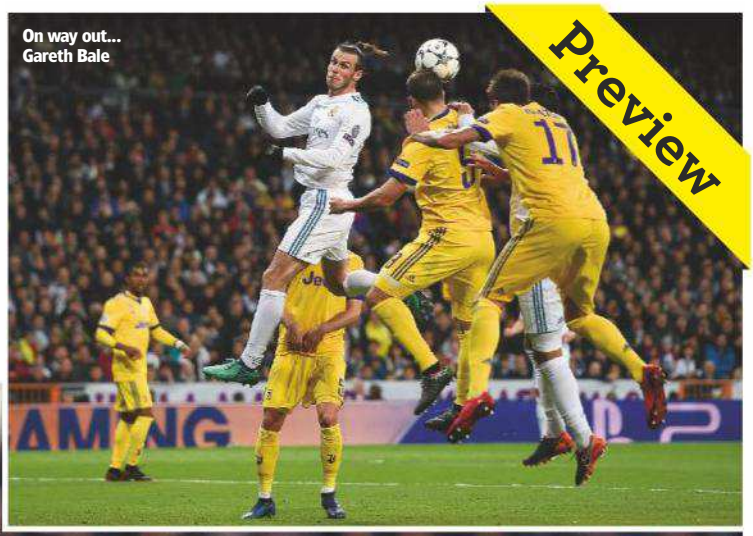
The future... Marco Asensio

like a mini Incredible Hulk."

When they won the 1998 and the 2000 Champions League Finals, Real had been pretty dreadful domestically. Europe, though, is their elixir, the competition through which their identity was built and where it still resides. It's their history, and it eclipses all else. This is their competition, they feel. Almost as if it belongs to them.

And while they have an enormity that no one else can match, a depth of talent that sets them apart, it is partly the fact that they feel that this cup belongs to them that it so often does.

Sid Lowe



On way out... Gareth Bale

Inevitable... Cristiano Ronaldo

Real Madrid: the key figures

Impressing

Cristiano Ronaldo, inevitably. When he scored the 98th-minute penalty against Juventus it was his 15th goal in the competition and maintained his record of having scored in every game. **Marcelo** continues to break the rules and be all the better for it, **Toni Kroos** and **Luka Modric** control the midfield, and **Sergio Ramos**' importance was shown by the team's suffering in his absence against Juve.

Emerging

Marco Asensio is still only 22, and has no guaranteed hold on a starting place, but he has already made key contributions in vital moments – especially against Paris Saint-Germain, when he changed the game, just when Madrid were under the most pressure. Skilful, fast, and with a great shot, he's had a couple of minor dips this season and not enjoyed the continuity he would like, but he has a great future ahead of him. Madrid have made a conscious decision to sign young, outstanding players from Spain and, although they have not taken the next step, it seems likely that **Dani Ceballos** and **Theo Hernandez** will have a part to play in the future. **Isco** is still young too.

Improving

Casemiro doesn't just underpin the midfield and protect others, these days he plays a lot more too. **Lucas Vazquez**, the ever reliable back up who is often used but rarely starts, has made a strong case to be considered for something more this season.

Missing

Possibly **Gareth Bale** and maybe **Karim Benzema** too, although Zinedine Zidane likes the way that the Frenchman links things together and provides space for Ronaldo. Either way, it appears certain now that the days of the BBC are over.

How they line up

Madrid have so much variety and so many ways of getting at opposing teams. They are able to control or counter-attack and have an unshakable belief. Zidane is a flexible coach who connects to his players, finding a formation that works for him and (most of) them.

WORDS: Tim Vickery

THE SPECIAL ONE

Manchester City's striker is the most important Brazilian to emerge since the 2014 World Cup

Timeline

JUL 1, 2013,
Signs a youth contract with Palmeiras and scores 54 goals in 48 games in his first season.

MAR 7, 2015
Makes his first-team debut for Palmeiras, in the Sao Paulo state championship, as a sub in a 1–0 win against Bragantino.

JUN 20, 2015
On the losing side as Serbia beat Brazil 2-1 after extra time in the Under-20 World Cup Final.

JUL 15, 2015
Scores his first goal for Palmeiras, away to Agremiacao Sportiva Arapiraquense in the Brazilian Cup.

DEC 2, 2015
Wins the Brazilian Cup with Palmeiras, beating Santos on penalties.

FEB 16, 2016
Scores his first goal in continental football as Palmeiras draw 2-2 in Uruguay against River Plate in the Libertadores Cup.

"Jesus is Brazilian" was the front page headline of the sports daily *Lance!* the day after a 1-0 win over Germany in March. It was a play on words, as the country commonly claims God as one of its own. And it was also a tribute to the scorer of the only goal – someone who is by far the most important Brazilian player to emerge since the last World Cup.

The win against the world champions re-enforced Brazil's credentials as one of the favourites in Russia – and the mature nature of the performance emphasised how far they have come since that astonishing 7-1 collapse against the same opponents in the 2014 semi-finals.

But the progress has been much more one of renewed concepts than of renewed players. Coach Tite has absorbed ideas from top-level European football – how to stay compact in defence and create numerical superiority in attack – and applied them to the considerable talent at his disposable.

But much of that talent was already around four years ago. From the line-up in Berlin, Marcelo and Fernandinho started the fateful 2014 semi, Paulinho and Willian came off the bench, Dani Alves was a substitute and Thiago Silva missed the game through suspension. And all of the outfield players who started the recent game were already full internationals at the time of the last World Cup, with one exception: scorer of the only goal, Gabriel Jesus.

Four years ago, as Brazil prepared to host the World Cup, Gabriel Fernando de Jesus was a 17-year-old with dreams.

He was already starting to make a name for himself in the youth ranks of Palmeiras, traditional giants from his native city of Sao Paulo. From the working class northern neighbourhood of Jardim Perri, his career was following a delightfully old-fashioned approach.

This is not a story of a hot-housed youngster, brought up through futsal, and swiftly turned into a commodity. He grew up playing his football on dirt-track pitches in his home neighbourhood, turning out for a succession of local teams. The last of them was Anhanguera, and he scored so many goals for them in an under-15 competition that he came to the attention of Palmeiras.

Tradition...getting ready for the 2014 World Cup finals

Hot prospect... with Palmeiras

In another sense, his is a sadder but all-too-typical tale of the Brazilian periphery. His father walked out on the family, leaving his mother to bring up four children on a cleaner's salary.

Dona Vera is the true heroine of the story, keeping the kids on a tight leash. "I was strict with them because I had to be," she says.

His mother and older brother, Felipe, still watch over him today in Manchester, but unlike some high-profile Brazilians, this day-to-day contact is less business management, more a case of keeping him grounded.

He was certainly well grounded four years ago. A few months back he posted a photograph on social media showing him at that time, an ordinary young Brazilian taking part in one of the country's biggest rituals: decorating the streets yellow, green and blue in celebration of the upcoming 2014 World Cup. "I look at these old photos and get emotional thinking about the dreams I had and the things I've been through to get to where I am now," he says. And now, four years later, it is his effigy that will be painted on streets all over the country.

He is a vital member of a team that

> "At Manchester City he is being trained by one of the best coaches in the world...this World Cup could belong to him" **Ze Roberto**

APR 6, 2016

Sent off for the first time in his career after fighting with Damian Musto in the Libertadores.

AUG 3, 2016

Palmeiras announce that he will join Manchester City in January 2017.

AUG 20, 2016

Wins a gold medal at the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro as Brazil beat Germany on penalties in the Olympic Final.

Star in the making... the youngster's early registration cards

will travel to Russia with high hopes.

"I was fortunate enough to play with Gabriel at Palmeiras," says the recently retired Ze Roberto. "He has a lot of talent, a lot of potential. And now at Manchester City he is being trained by one of the best coaches in the world, which is going to help his development. This World Cup could belong to him."

Ze Roberto's international career coincided with the days of Ronaldo and Adriano, when Brazil were rich in centre-forward resources. In the 2010 World Cup the position belonged to Luis Fabiano, an efficient performer without the brilliance of his predecessors. And thereafter the position turned into something of a problem.

Towards the end of his two-year reign as national coach, Mano Menezes was experimenting with a 4-2-4-0 formation, without a recognised centre-forward. At the very moment that things were starting to look interesting, he was sacked, and replacement Luiz Felipe Scolari instantly brought back the target man figure. Brazil went into the 2014 World Cup with their attacking line led by Fred. It had worked well enough during the previous year's Confederations Cup, but it failed dismally now – and the presence on the bench of Jo, his reserve, did not instil fear into opposing defences.

The task of picking up the pieces after the 2014 disaster bizarrely fell to Dunga, who never seemed sure of what he wanted from his centre-forward. First he went with a more mobile striker in Diego Tardelli, and also tried out Roberto Firmino, who got the nod for the 2015 Copa America. But he also lurched towards more physical strength, giving Luiz Adriano a chance and then settling on Hulk, who began the 2018 qualifiers as first choice. But he soon gave way to the veteran Ricardo Oliveira, and there was even an attempt at playing Neymar through the middle. With both of these players unavailable for the 2016 Centenary Copa, Dunga went with Jonas, before giving young Gabriel Barbosa a chance in the fateful third group game and replacing him with Hulk in the second half.

So when Tite took over the position was wide open – and a decision had to be made before a crunch qualifier away to Ecuador.

Tite was unsure. He wanted to go with youth and pace. His first squad included Taison of Shakhtar Donetsk as a standby, but the battle for the centre-forward slot was to be fought between two of the team that had just won the Olympic gold medal: Gabriel Barbosa, who had left Santos for Internazionale, and Jesus, who was due to join Manchester City from Palmeiras at the end of the year.

In hindsight it looks like a no-brainer, but at the time it was a tough decision.

The evidence from the Olympic campaign was far from conclusive. Brazil had started with two dismal goalless draws, in which Jesus had been utterly ineffective at centre-forward. An emergency restructuring was carried out for the third match, with Jesus moved to wide left, Barbosa staying on the other flank, and Neymar moving inside where he was joined by Luan. Suddenly Brazil started generating football, and Jesus added three goals to the cause as the team moved towards the title.

But a few good games cutting in from the left wing during a home Olympics were hardly a convincing argument to play centre-forward in a crunch World Cup qualifier at the other end of the continent.

Moreover, was the 19-year-old really ready – in emotional terms as much as technical ability?

His potential was undeniable. As he banged in the goals in the youth ranks, Palmeiras fans had gone as far as to organise a petition calling for his swift promotion to the first team. At that time he played under the name of Gabriel Fernando – but soon he accepted his saviour status, switched his name to Jesus and asked for the number 33 shirt.

Youth...with Clube Pequeninos do Meio Ambiente

He helped the team win the domestic cup in 2015, when he was chosen as revelation of the season. The following year Palmeiras won the league and he was named the outstanding player. But that year the team was also humiliatingly eliminated from the Libertadores Cup at the group stage. Jesus had looked full of spark, but in the vital game, away to Nacional of Uruguay he lost his head and was sent off. There was an air of immaturity about him. A song in his honour mentioned his cry baby face. A missed chance or a decision going against him looked likely to set off an existential crisis.

It was a bold gesture of faith from Tite, then, to hand Jesus the number-

SEP 1, 2016
Makes his senior international debut in a World Cup qualifier against Ecuador in Quito and scores twice as Brazil win 3-0.

NOV 27, 2016
Helps Palmeiras to clinch their first Brazilian league title in 22 years with a 1-0 win at home to Chapecoense.

JAN 19, 2017
Completes his transfer to Manchester City for a reported fee of £27million, plus add-ons.

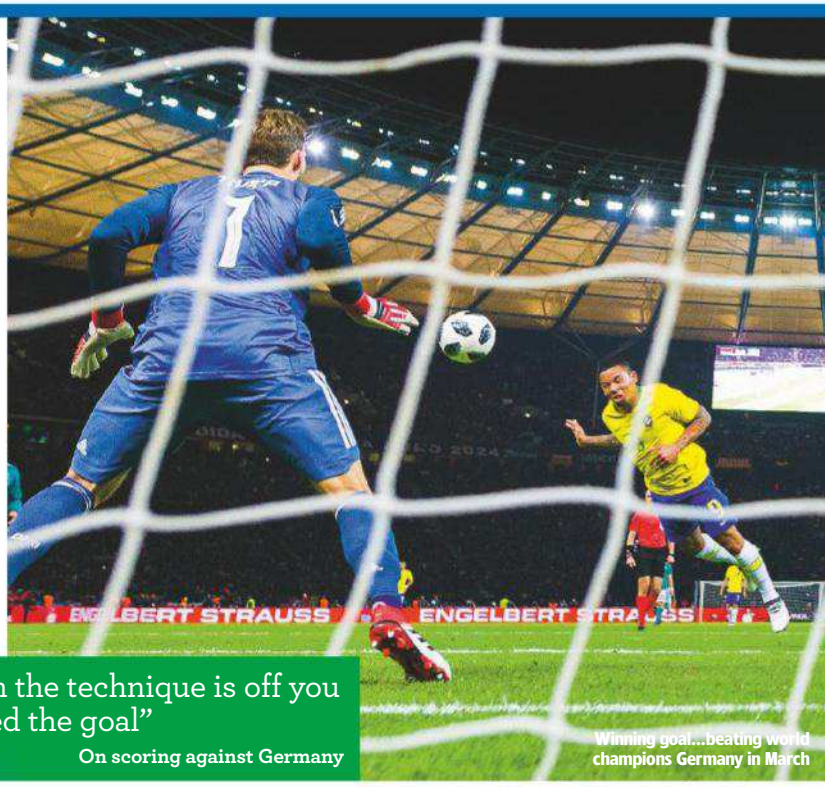
JAN 21, 2017
Makes his Premier League debut as an 82nd-minute substitute in a 2-2 draw at home to Tottenham Hotspur.

Dream debut... after scoring against Ecuador

nine shirt for the trip to Ecuador. And with 20 minutes to go, the move had not been a conspicuous success. The game was goalless – a result that Brazil would have settled for – and while the rookie centre-forward had shown some pace he had spent most of the match wandering into offside positions.

But suddenly a game, a campaign and a career all changed. Jesus' speed broke the deadlock, latching on to a bad backpass and being brought down by the keeper to win a penalty, which Neymar converted. And then, to make sure of matters, Jesus scored two contrasting goals of true brilliance: the first a clever close-range flick from a cross, the second a turn on the edge of the box and a gorgeous shot placed into the far corner.

A goalless draw had been turned into a 3-0 victory, Brazil had a new momentum and they had also discovered a new centre-forward.



Winning goal...beating world champions Germany in March

> "It wasn't one of my best days...but when the technique is off you have to try harder and that's how I scored the goal"
>
> On scoring against Germany

In the dressing room Gabriel phoned his mother. Her immediate reaction was to criticise him for continually being caught offside. This family mixture of support coupled with the demand for high standards is a key part of his mix. One of his youth coaches once commented that Gabriel's left foot was weak and that he was poor in the air, but when he made his Manchester City debut, coming off the bench against Tottenham Hotspur, his immediate impression was made in the air and with his left foot.

And in the next few games, Brazil were the beneficiaries of the range of his talent. He was more than just a speedster with a capacity for off-the-cuff moments, he could combine beautifully – and Tite had spied the potential for a fruitful relationship with Neymar, seen most clearly in qualification with a superb pass that took the Argentina defence out of the game and allowed Neymar to score Brazil's clinching second goal in a 3-0 victory.

As well as setting up goals for Neymar, Phillippe Coutinho and Renato Augusto, Jesus kept scoring plenty of his own. The opening goal away to Venezuela must have been especially pleasing for Pep Guardiola as he worked hard to get on the end of a poor kick out from the opposing keeper, who was then left helpless by a sublime lob.

A couple of injuries at City have made the path a little less smooth, and the Liverpool form of Firmino has been sufficiently outstanding to keep him on his toes. But if there were any doubts about who is most likely to start the World Cup campaign as first-choice centre-forward, they were surely dispelled by Tite's selection in the March friendlies, and by the final outcome.

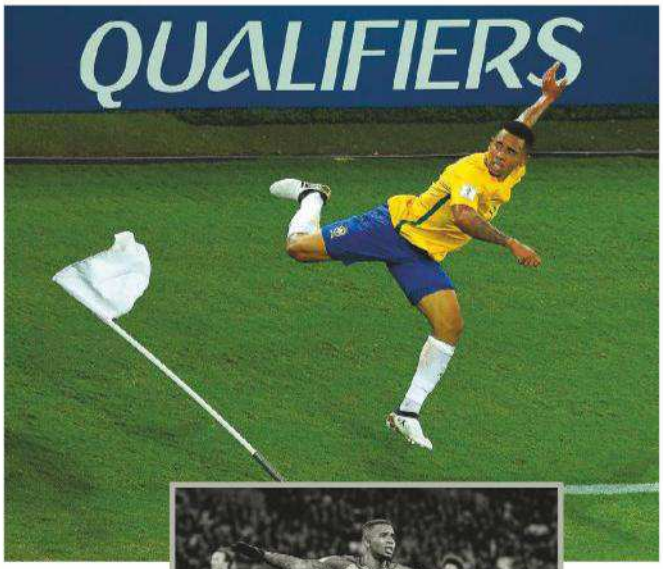
After just 15 games he already has nine international goals – and every time he has scored, Brazil have won. And the record stays intact after his header proved sufficient to beat the Germans.

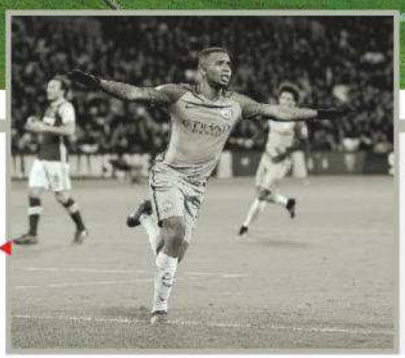
"It wasn't one of my best days from a technical point of view," he said after the game. "I made some mistakes with my finishing, but when the technique is off you have to try harder and that's how I scored the goal."

Quick enough to be played behind the defensive line, good enough to combine at pace with his team-mates, brave enough to battle it out with the centre-backs and developing at a pace faster than his speed across the ground, Jesus has solved Brazil's centre-forward problem – and could be capable of feats in Russia that will be immortalised by street painters all over Brazil.

The kid with a dream is now the proud representative of the hopes of a nation of 200million. WS

Deadly...he has scored more than a goal a game so far for his country





FEB 1, 2017
Scores on his first Premier League start as City win 4-0 away at West Ham United.

SEP 13, 2017
Scores his first Champions League goal in a 4-0 win in Holland against Feyenoord.

FEB 25, 2018
Comes on as sub as Manchester City beat Arsenal 3-0 in the League Cup Final.

MAR 27, 2018
Scores the only goal of the game as Brazil win 1-0 away to world champions Germany.

Gabriel Jesus

the numbers game

BRAZIL LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

- 2011 — **NEYMAR** (Santos)
- 2012 — **FRED** (Fluminense)
- 2013 — **EVERTON RIBEIRO** (Cruzeiro)
- 2014 — **EVERTON RIBEIRO** (Cruzeiro)
- 2015 — **RENATO AUGUSTO** (Corinthians)
- 2016 — **GABRIEL JESUS** (Palmeiras)
- 2017 — **JO** (Corinthians)

BRAZILIAN LEAGUE WINNERS (TIMES)

BRAZIL

15
CAPS

GOALS
9

WORLD CUP HOTSHOTS

Top South American goalscorers in World Cup 2018 qualification

10 — **EDINSON CAVANI** (Uruguay)

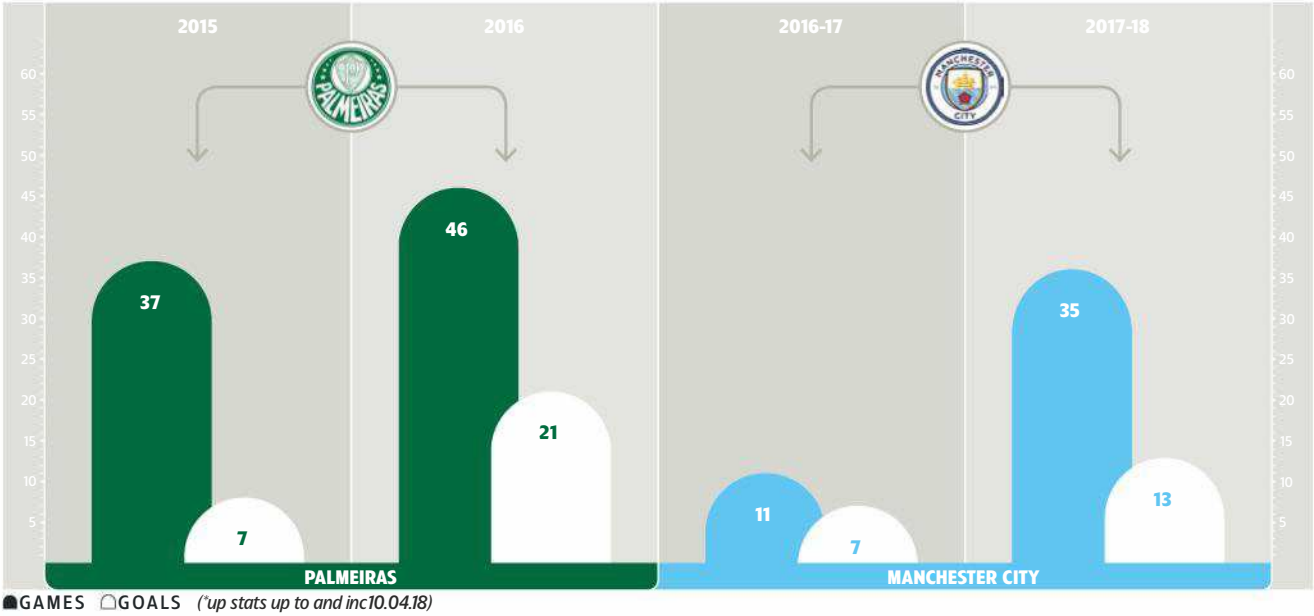
7 — **FELIPE CAICEDO** (Ecuador), **GABRIEL JESUS** (Brazil), **LIONEL MESSI** (Argentina), **ALEXIS SANCHEZ** (Chile)

SHIRT NUMBER

33

From a very religious family, he reportedly likes to wear the number 33 shirt in tribute to the age at which Jesus was believed to have been crucified.

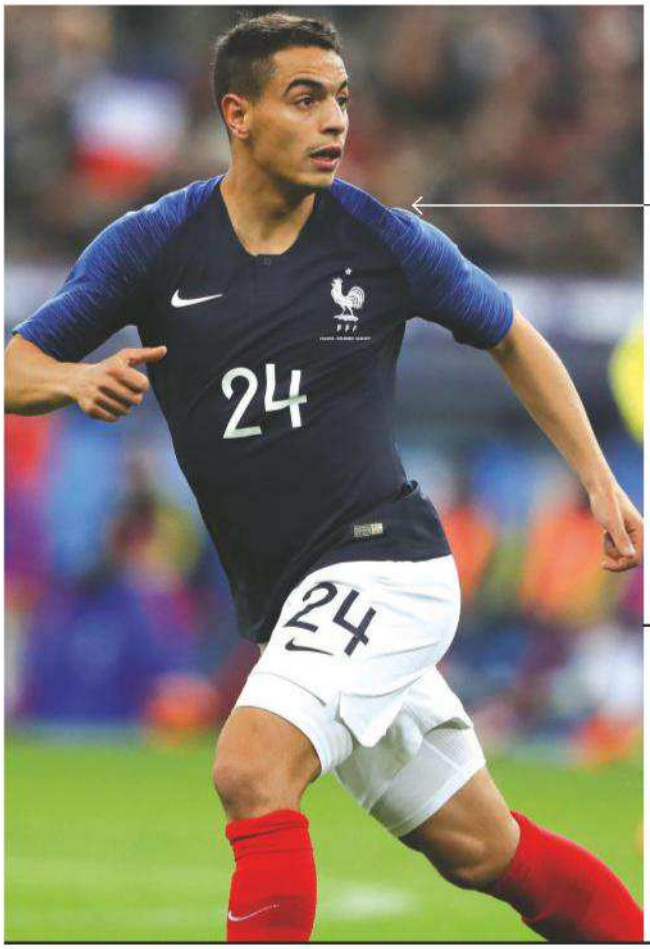
HONOURS



GAMES GOALS (*up stats up to and inc10.04.18)

10 of the best World Cup Wild cards

Players who could spring a surprise in Russia



1 Wissam BEN YEDDER

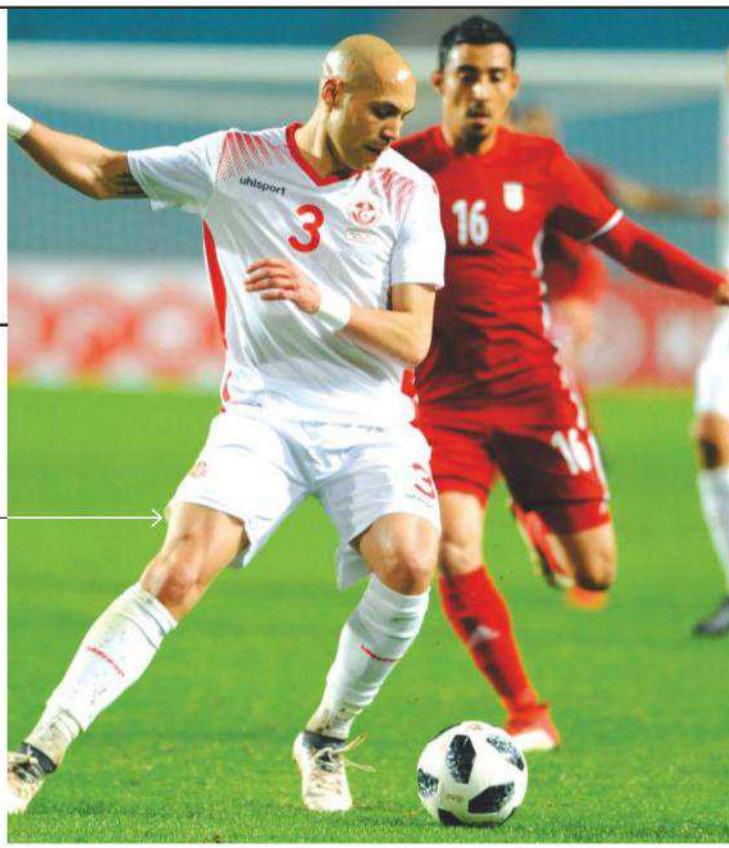
FRANCE

Awarded his first cap in a friendly against Colombia in March, the 27-year-old Sevilla striker is in the form of his life at the moment.

A prolific marksman for his club in this season's Champions League – and especially impressive when scoring both his side's goals in their win away at Manchester United – the Paris-born front runner could be the ideal impact sub for France this summer. Quick to adjust to the rhythm of a game, he is mobile, sharp, good in restricted spaces and a natural finisher, averaging more than 18 goals a season over the last five campaigns with Sevilla and former club Toulouse.

"In the box, he's the best in France," ex-Toulouse boss Pascal Dupraz once declared. "In fact, there are few in Europe as good at putting the ball in the net as him."

He honed his skills playing futsal and was good enough to represent France. Although he qualifies to play for Tunisia through his parents, he chose *Les Bleu*s instead.



2 Yohan BENALOUANE

TUNISIA

The centre-back might be out of favour at Leicester City, playing only a handful of competitive games this season, but he remains very much in contention for a piece of the World Cup action.

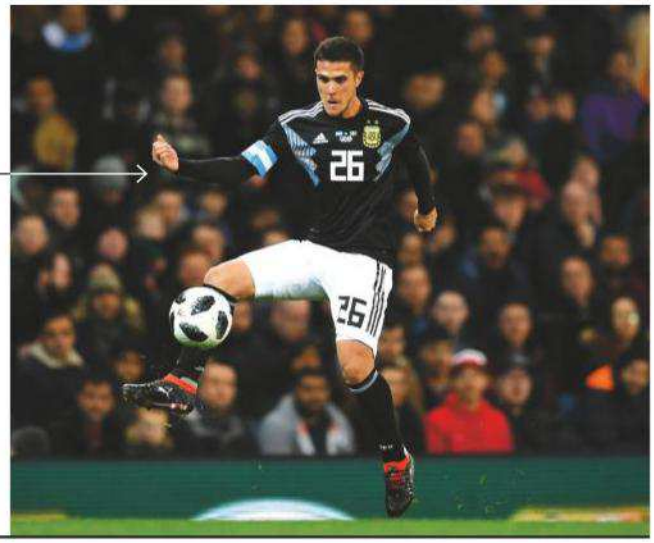
After years of refusing a call-up to the Tunisian set-up, he changed his mind in March and duly made his debut in a friendly win against Iran.

At the ripe old age of 30 he is, at long last, an international – but his arrival has not pleased everyone in the Tunisian camp. Some fans regard him as an opportunist, while it has been reported that several locally sourced members of the squad are unhappy with their federation's current mania for recruiting Europe-born Tunisians.

The "us and them" talk does not bode well for the summer.

3 Fabricio BUSTOS

ARGENTINA



A tattoo on the 21-year-old's right arm reads: "Effort is the magic which transforms dreams into reality." And it is a fitting motto for the warrior-like right-back who last month made his debut for his country in a 2-0 friendly win against Italy at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester.

Ebullient and gritty, he goes by the nickname of "'Bulldozer" and has already had to clear plenty of obstacles in his short career so far, not least recovering from three serious knee injuries since joining Independiente at the age of 11.

A South American champion with Argentina's under-17s in 2013, he is rumoured to be on the shopping list of no less than Bayern Munich and, to that end, is already taking German lessons.

4 Jonathan GONZALEZ

MEXICO

The Monterrey holding midfielder took a momentous decision earlier this year when opting to switch allegiance from the USA to Mexico.

Born and raised in California, he had played regularly for Stateside youth teams, but the US federation made a mistake in assuming that he would not stray.

With his father, Alonso, keen for the 18-year-old to make the Mexican pledge, the United States' failure to qualify for Russia 2018 may also have been a factor in the sudden change of heart. But in the final analysis, it was simply a case of the Mexicans doing a better job of making him feel wanted.

A Mexican apertura title winner last year, he was voted into the league's team of the season and made his Mexico debut in January.

5 Anthony LIMBOMBE

BELGIUM

The 23-year-old was the only new boy in the "*Diables Rouges*" squad for their spring tune-up fixture with Saudi Arabia in Brussels.

And while spoilt for choice in most positions, Belgium are relatively short of options on the left flank. So in the wake of Yannick Ferreira-Carrasco's switch from Atletico Madrid for Dalian Yifang in China, a World Cup door may well have opened for the Club Brugge flyer.

If excellent current form is the only arbiter, the Belgium-born wide-man of Congolese descent should already be packing his bags for Russia. He has pace, power and bristling intent, always keen to cut inside and shoot explosively with his right foot. He can also create too, and works incredibly hard, constantly shuttling up and down his flank.

Now in his second season at the Jan Breydel Stadium – arriving from Dutch side NEC Nijmegen in 2016 – his astonishing success this term has come as something of a surprise to even his biggest fans.

For large parts of the previous campaign he flattered to deceive with the "*Blauw-Zwart*" and at one point he was reported to be on the verge of quitting the club.

6 Andrew NABBOUT

AUSTRALIA

Just three years ago, the left-winger or striker was at a very low ebb indeed, without a club for six months and haunted by the thought that his professional career was over.

But how he has bounced back, turning on the style for A-League side Newcastle Jets and earning a move in March to Japanese big-hitters Urawa Red Diamonds, who last year won the Asian Champions League. Then, two weeks after his transfer, he won his first senior cap for Australia.

Renowned for his hustle-and-bustle style, the 25-year-old from Melbourne is particularly dangerous when lining up shots from distance and memorably cracked home a goal-of-the-season contender for Jets against Western Sydney in February, curling home a beauty with the outside of his right boot.

The early stages of his football life were much less rewarding and he was released by both Melbourne Victory and Malaysian club Negeri Sembilan. Has since admitted to battling with anxiety and depression during his time at Victory.

7 Alvaro ODRIOZOLA

SPAIN

The 22-year-old's career is moving forward at a prodigious rate and he has not looked back since making his debut for Real Sociedad last year. He has swiftly established himself as one of the best right-backs in La Liga, winning under-21 honours for Spain and then earning his first cap towards the end of last season.

Although Spain have a glut of fine right-backs in Dani Carvajal, Hector Bellerin and Sergi Roberto, his sense of adventure and blinding pace give him a fair chance of making the squad for Russia.

Originally a winger, he was only converted to full-back when youth coach Inaki Satrustegui realised that his explosiveness could be better used from deep.

Rumours abound that Real Madrid want to sign him.

8 Mario RUI
PORTUGAL

The fast-improving Napoli left-back made his debut for the European champions in a March warm-up game against Holland in Geneva. And despite a 3-0 defeat, the 26-year-old was one of the few positive notes for Portugal that night.

With his stock clearly rising with the Serie A high-fliers, he is in far better shape than some of his rivals for the national-team shirt, with Borussia Dortmund's Raphael Guerreiro only playing sporadically because of injury and Sporting's Fabio Coentrao in his employers' bad books for leading a player revolt.

He has played in Italy for the past seven years – with Gubbio, Spezia, Empoli and Roma – and got his big chance at Napoli this term when Faouzi Ghoulam damaged a knee in November.

9 Milos VELJKOVIC
SERBIA

Although the Swiss-born centre-back was one of Serbia's "Golden Generation", winning the world under-20 title in 2015, the 22-year-old has yet to start a full international for his country and boasts just a couple of short cameos in friendlies last autumn.

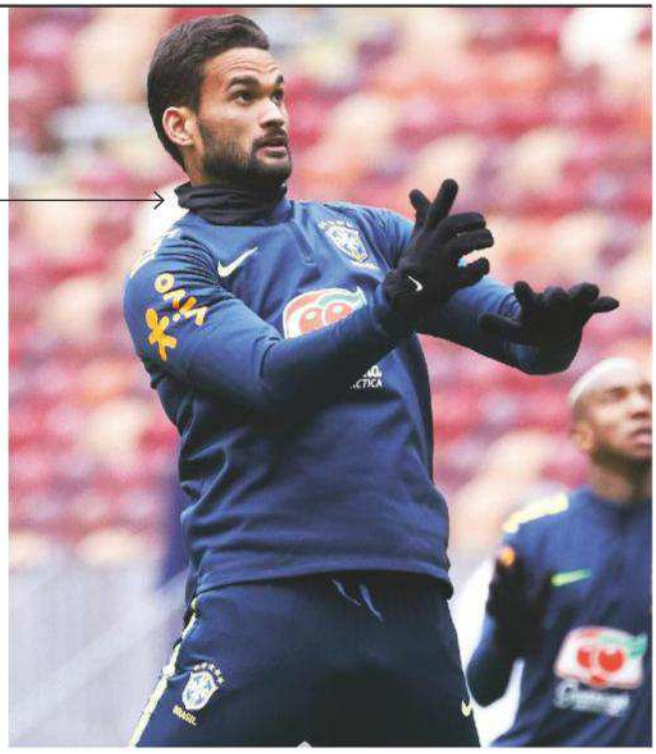
However, an impressive campaign in the Bundesliga this season with Werder Bremen should see him on the plane to Russia as a back-up option in the summer.

He has much in common with Serbia's national coach Mladen Krstajic, who was an uncompromising central defender himself and also played for Bremen, winning the Bundesliga in 2004.

Veljkovic, however, is a more versatile customer who is equally comfortable on the left or right of a three-man rearguard. He can also operate centrally in a flat back four and could even step in as a midfield holder if required.

As a teenager he was based in England but made little impact. Unable to make the grade at Tottenham Hotspur, he fared little better on loan at Middlesbrough and Charlton Athletic, and he left Spurs for Bremen in a €300,000 deal early in 2016.

10 Willian JOSE
BRAZIL



Should Brazil's sparkling array of attacking talent – step forward Neymar, Gabriel Jesus, Roberto Firmino and Philippe Coutinho – unexpectedly fail to deliver the goods, *Selecao* coach Tite will be in need of a Plan B in Russia. And that's where the Real Sociedad striker might just come in.

Although the 26-year-old is yet to win his first cap for his country, he was called into the squad for the friendlies in March against Germany and this summer's tournament hosts. And as a classic, old-school centre-forward, the physically imposing front man would certainly give packed opposition defences a different set of problems to deal with.

As he has proved with Real Sociedad over the past two seasons, he is a fine finisher with either foot and provides a major threat in the air at set-pieces.

A member of the Brazil under-20 side that claimed the South American and world titles back in 2011, he has been earning his corn in Spain for the past five years.

Initially arriving in Europe to play for Castilla – who are Real Madrid's B team – he went on to feature for Zaragoza and Las Palmas before signing for Sociedad in 2016.

Last year he revealed in an interview that he was considering the possibility of applying for Spanish citizenship, but a call from Tite this summer would certainly put an end to that idea.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Infantino's gamble

FIFA is introducing video technology for the World Cup despite concerns that it is happening too quickly, says Keir Radnedge

Video technology will be the big story when the World Cup kicks off in Moscow on June 14 – even if everything runs smoothly. In 2014, the debut of goal-line technology in Brazil was no big deal because it is about one simple fact. Video technology involves subjective opinion.

And tests undertaken worldwide over the past two years have not merely proved the point but underlined it.

This is not to say that football is wrong to follow the video path. Plainly, at the highest level, which demands the fewest possible costly errors, video assistance for the referee is essential.

Michel Platini, suspended from the corridors of power and still pressing his innocence to the European Court of Human Rights, remains an opponent. But Platini, and a band of philosophical refuseniks who hold that video technology sullies the natural essence of the game, is in the minority.

Even most of the critics of VAR's confused application, notably in several high-profile European leagues, accept the validity of the concept, while protesting that insufficient time has been allowed to iron out the creases of comprehension and communication.

Gianni Infantino, a loyal refusenik when Platini's general-secretary at UEFA, has flip-flopped on the issue as neatly as Sepp Blatter did when the former FIFA president announced his conversion to goal-line technology after Frank Lampard's phantom goal at the 2010 World Cup.

Within a week of being elected FIFA president in March 2016, Infantino was announcing his intention of seeing VAR in operation at the 2018 World Cup.

It took the game a full seven years to bring goal-line technology to the World Cup from the original first flawed public experiment at a World Youth Cup in Colombia in 2007 to the high seal of approval in Brazil in 2014.

Platini remained the most high-profile critic. He opposed goal-line technology because he opposed the intrusion of technology per se and feared that its introduction would push open the door to the complications of video assistance. On this he was correct.

Indeed, only weeks after IFAB approved formal testing of goal-line technology, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insisted: "It is time for us to help the referees – to all be united and have a less conservative approach and finally opt for video."

His argument was reasoned, not emotional, and he added: "Video will help the referees, not question their authority. It will give them more credit, more authority and fewer mistakes. Football is the first sport in the world today but we have to accept we have the most conservative approach to the game than any other sport.

"This can be a strength but on the refereeing side I think it has been a weakness."

A weakness which, for better or worse in terms of a rush to judgment, is being rectified.

> In 2014, the debut of goal-line technology in Brazil was no big deal because it is about one simple fact. Video technology involves subjective opinion

Wenger was supported by FIFA presidential candidate Jerome Champagne, who pointed out that "when half of the fans in the stadium flip open their smartphone to check offside, the only people without this device are the main referee and his assistants".

One referee who paid the penalty was Roberto Rosetti – who, ironically, will be the man in charge of VAR for FIFA this summer (see page 48).

Hours after the Lampard "goal" in South Africa, Rosetti – relying on his assistant, Stefano Ayroldi – mistakenly awarded Argentina's Carlos Tevez a goal early in their match against Mexico. Replays showed that Tevez had been well offside but the goal stood and the furious Mexicans lost 3-1. Rosetti was sent home.

In 2013 the Dutch federation began experimenting with an off-line pilot system called Arbitrage 2.0 and, after some positive results, FIFA president Blatter proposed that immediate reviews of TV evidence should be allowed for up

to two challenges by each manager.

"I rejected technological aids in the past," admitted Blatter. "But there is no use sticking to entrenched positions and clinging to principles for the sake of it. Our objective must be to make football more transparent and credible, and to support referees in their difficult task."

IFAB referred the issue to its football and technical advisory panels, and approved a start to VAR experimentation in 2017 based around the four instances of goalscoring (including offside uncertainty), red and yellow cards, penalties and mistaken identity.

No preference was offered on whether the video ref should be in a central control centre or the stadium.

Infantino had put his cards on the table in 2016 by forecasting VAR in Russia. He reiterated his opinion at just about every subsequent appearance. The momentum was unstoppable – never mind the snags, hitches, complaints, confusions and blunders being thrown up by league action in Germany, Italy and Portugal, occasional cup-ties in England and Holland and at the Confederations Cup last summer in Russia.

While Confederations Cup games featured recourse to VAR on around 30 occasions, FIFA counted only six corrections: four relating to offside, once to handball and once to rectify mistaken identity over a red card.

But FIFA's positivity was not echoed by all. As Chile's Arturo Vidal said: "We were told about the video referee before the tournament but you forget it all in the intensity of the moment in a match."

Infantino was "extremely happy with VAR" and so was his head of refereeing Massimo Busacca, who said: "We know what is working and what is not and we will see what can be improved.

"Communication is crucial. It must be short and clear. Not too long.

"We have to admit that is not good. We will never be perfect but we will achieve a reduction in the mistakes. Technology is a big tool for prevention."

Improvement appears to be slow in emerging, raising concerns for the World Cup over the following issues:

- Failure to provide swift clarification to fans about whatever may be at issue;
- Differing interpretations over "a clear mistake" and whether the match referee or the video referee should react;
- Lack of experience of many World Cup referees with VAR (workshops are no substitute for high-level competitive experience);
- Mismatch of different nationalities on-pitch and off-pitch for the same match who, whatever their competence in English, may not speak the same "football language";
- Danger of referees acceding to player power for fear of a mistake which could wreck their careers – and end their World Cup.

Inevitably, the international media will be waiting to pounce.

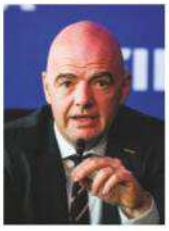
FIFA has enough image problems without putting the credibility of its World Cup at risk. Infantino, in his haste to make his mark, is playing a dangerous game with VAR. WS

What it is and what it isn't

VAR can only be used for four specific types of decision: goals, penalty decisions, direct red cards and cases of mistaken identity. So:

1. The referee must always make a decision and that decision will stand unless it is "clearly wrong";
2. The referee can only go back to the start of the attacking phase which leads to the incident;
3. A goal scored from a throw-in which should have gone to the other team could not be disallowed under the new system; and
4. If the ball is still in play, the referee must wait until it is in a neutral zone before stopping play. If the decision is not overturned, play restarts with a drop ball.

Trial...at the Confederations Cup



Fan...Gianni Infantino

Decision...Chile's Arturo Vidal (centre) argues with ref Damir Skomina during the Confederations Cup

Wrong...referee Roberto Rosetti allows Carlos Tevez's goal to stand for Argentina against Mexico

THE VIEW FROM AUSTRALIA

A mess, with referees under increasing stress

Video technology probably stood a better chance of success in Australia as this is a nation used to the third umpire in cricket, and the snickometer and hawkeye gadgetry that comes with it.

But football doesn't have natural "stop" points like cricket, and the laws of the game are not so black and white.

In the early part of the A-League season, the implementation of VAR was a mess, with Perth Glory coach Kenny Lowe saying it was "making a mockery of a lovely game".

The match between Adelaide United and Western Sydney Wanderers in November underlined the point.

When Baba Diawara's shot hit the arm of Wanderers' Robert Cornthwaite at close range in the penalty area, referee Chris Beath missed it. However, VAR intervened and Cornthwaite, who had already been booked, was sent off.

Later on, Ryan Kitto gave Adelaide the lead, but although replays showed Diawara to be offside, and interfering with play, VAR did not intervene and Wanderers were left feeling they had fallen foul of a miscarriage of justice twice.

Intervention... Robert Cornthwaite is sent off

Such incidents became almost a weekly occurrence, and the sight of refs jogging to the sidelines to review decisions via a small TV screen brought interminable delays and howls of protest.

Eventually, the head of the A-League, Greg O'Rourke, made the decision to severely limit VAR's involvement, since when things have improved to an extent.

"Just get rid of the obvious howler," a weary O'Rourke put it, in a call to avoid marginal 50-50 calls.

But anomalies remain because no matter how sophisticated the technology, human beings still have to interpret the evidence. VAR may ultimately provide more correct decisions, but the process involved kills the spontaneity of the game.

The real victims, however, are the people that VAR was introduced to help most: the already under-stress referees – who still receive just as much abuse as they ever did, and maybe even more so.

Simon Hill

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH KOREA

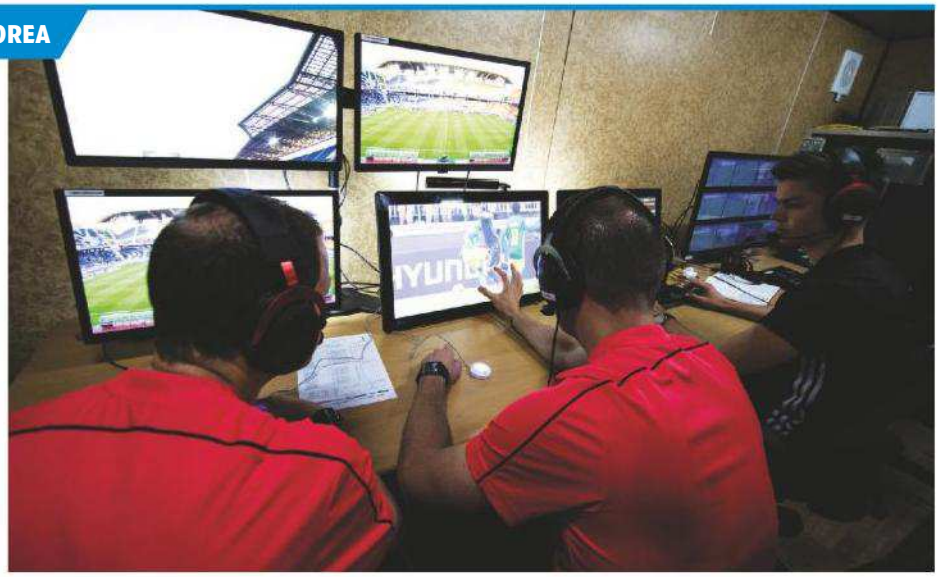
Delays add to K-League's woes

South Korea was an early adopter of VAR but there was controversy from the first games featuring the new technology.

On July 1, 2017, Suwon Samsung Bluewings hosted Ulsan Hyundai. Just past the hour mark and it was 1-1 when Ulsan scored, in the words of the commentator, with a "really good header" from Lee Jong-ho.

But rather than jog back to the centre circle the referee did that now-familiar outlining of a television screen. The commentators were non-plussed. Lee had been unmarked when he headed home from just inside the area and there was no hint of offside.

The referee made his way to the TV table near the tunnel and started watching. Fans had to wait – though, as Korea is famed for fast internet, and with most K-League games broadcast live and online, it was no problem for the supporters to watch the replays. It turned out that a foul in the build-up, well inside the Suwon half, was the culprit.



VAR box...at the Under-20 World Cup

The problem was that it took almost seven minutes to sort out.

Later in the season, a goal that resulted from a sweeping pitch-long move was called back and ruled out as the ball was said to be not entirely stationary when the original goal-kick was taken.

While the application of VAR has improved over the last nine months or so, the K-League has bigger problems to deal with, as attendances and interest have been falling for years and are currently at an all-time low.

Apart from the hardcore, the more casual fans have been complaining for years about conservative tactics, the slowness of the action and how many stoppages there are.

VAR is slowing things down further while trying to tackle a problem that is not seen as much of an issue in Korea.

John Duerden

THE VIEW FROM POLAND

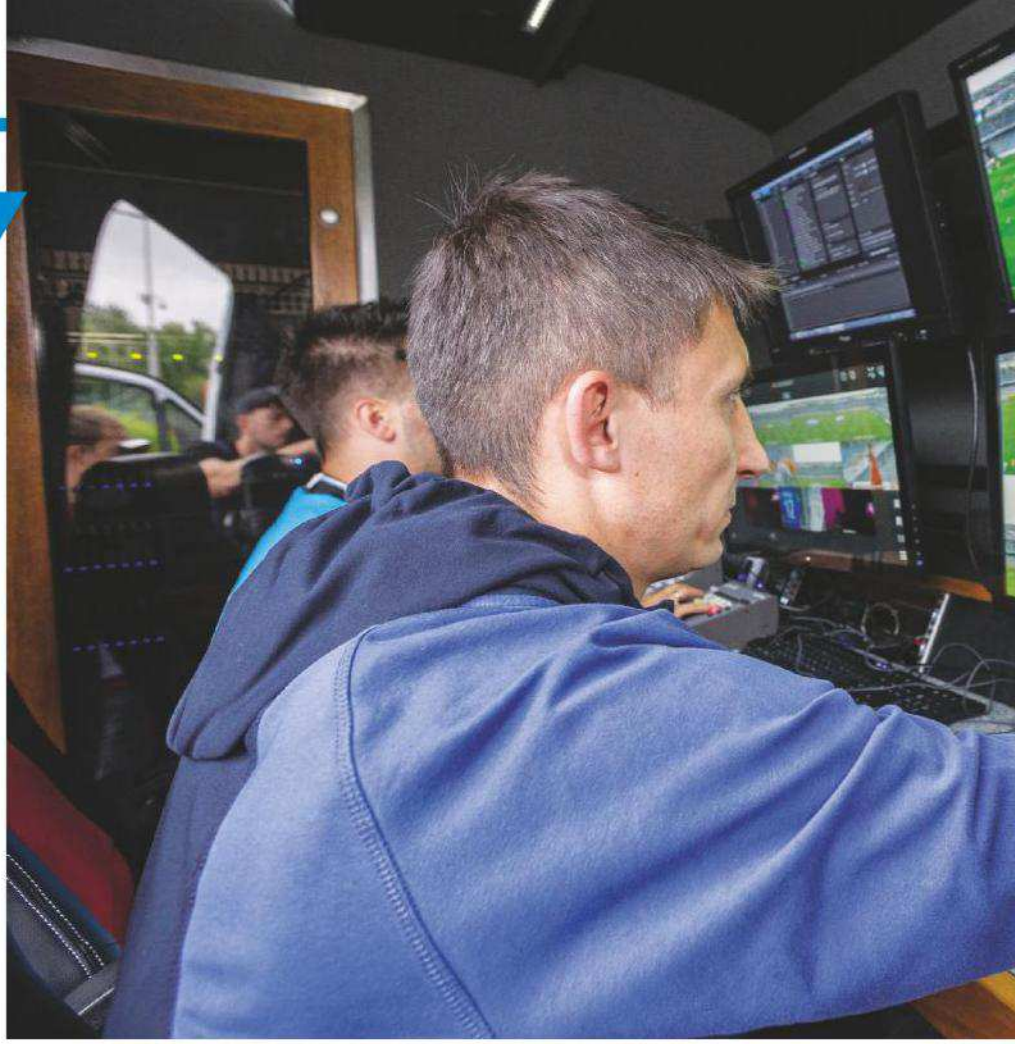
A success despite the politics

The introduction of VAR to Polish football at the start of the season was not without its problems, but now it is used in almost every game in the Ekstraklasa, the country's top flight.

Poland's adoption of the system has been a personal triumph for Rafal Rostkowski, a FIFA assistant referee from 2001 to 2017, who at the start of last year began his own campaign to bring VAR to Poland.

"During the first months of 2017 I appeared in different Polish media around 50 times," explains Rostkowski. "Why? Because of two reasons. The first one, like all over the world: to improve the refereeing.

"More important was the second reason. I started to be worried that Poland could be suspended from international competitions when FIFA or IFAB realised what was happening



THE VIEW FROM GERMANY

Fans turn against technology

On the face of it, the first season of VAR in the Bundesliga has, thus far, been a success. Thanks to the use of video technology, 77 per cent of "clear and obvious" refereeing errors were corrected in the first half of the current campaign and so popular has the new system proved, that German top-flight clubs recently voted unanimously to keep it for at least another term.

However, strip away the PR veneer and the report card is not remotely as glowing. Up and down the country, large swathes of fans are rising up in protest against the electronic eye, while in a mid-season poll commissioned by *Kicker* magazine, 47 per cent of Bundesliga professionals admitted they would like to see it scrapped.

Unhappy...Stuttgart fans complain

Supporters inside the ground and the players tend to share the same basic misgivings: the lengthy interruptions for incident analysis; the lack of transparency and communication in such moments and the disastrous consequences for the natural flow of the game.

Far too often, the fans simply have no idea what is going on. "We know we have to do something about it," admitted Eugen Strigel of the German federation's refereeing committee. "Right now, it's not satisfactory."

Prominent among the VAR-related complaints is the conviction that the passion and immediacy is being sucked out of the matchday experience. Whether on the terraces or the pitch, the celebration of a goal has lost that primal burst of raw euphoria. All the big decisions – the goals, penalties or red cards – are now only final when poured over on the small screen. For the critics of VAR, the Bundesliga is supposed to stand for bubbling sporting excitement. Not bureaucratic box-ticking.

Many German fans feel that VAR is only relevant to football as part of a TV-viewing package. In the cauldron-like confines of a stadium, they argue, the quest to avoid miscarriages of justice, merely serves to dampen down the atmosphere.

Two banners unfurled at Werder Bremen's Weserstadion perfectly sum up the mood of German ultras at the moment: "Three cheers for emotional spontaneity; Down with the video referee" and "VAR = Emotion killer".

Nick Bidwell

Mobile...Poland has four vans

in Poland. There were personal and very 'sick' interpretations of the rules by the chairman of the referee's association, Zbigniew Przesmycki on offsides, handballs and fouls in penalty area, for example.

"I knew with VAR most of these anomalies would disappear because IFAB would control the way all countries use the system."

It was a lonely battle for Rostkowski, who adds: "Przesmycki was strongly against VAR and FA president Zbigniew Boniek even mocked me on Twitter."

> "It is a big circus. We don't need VAR in football. There is no emotion, when we need to wait"
>
> Lech Poznan coach Nenad Bjelica

But Boniek would later change his mind and the Polish FA decided to introduce VAR, which was used for the first time when Legia Warsaw played Arka Gdynia in the Super Cup in July 2017.

The system, costing €1m for the season, uses four VAR vans with all the necessary equipment that move between stadiums and cover all games in one round or weekend.

A potential problem will arise on the final day of the regular season when all the games kick off at the same time. In these exceptional circumstances, the FA has decided to not use VAR in every game.

One of the biggest VAR critics has been Lech Poznan's Croatian coach Nenad Bjelica. After the game against Lechia Gdansk, when VAR decisions were not good for his team, he complained: "It is a big circus. We don't need VAR in football. There is no emotion, when we need to wait."

The former Polish FIFA referee and FA chairman Michal Listkiewicz is now chief of Czech Republic's referee association and is in a position to be able to compare the situation in both countries.

"In the Czech Republic only two games are broadcast live in every round. Ice hockey is more popular," explains Listkiewicz. "In Poland all the games are broadcast. That is important because we have a large group of very capable TV technicians, who are crucial in using this system.

"Good technicians are as important as the VAR referee in using this system. These technicians should "feel" football very well. Without them, it is impossible to prepare video replays quickly.

"Fortunately, in Poland this co-operation seems to be very good."

Dariusz Kurowski

THE VIEW FROM PORTUGAL

Doubts over flags and referee indecision

By the end of March, 50 decisions had been reversed and corrected in the Portuguese top flight by the referee after consultation with the VAR.

In Estoril's game against Sporting, three key decisions – a validated goal for each team and a disallowed goal for Estoril – were reversed, with the referee having initially got all three decisions wrong. "VAR is a tool that helps the referees and will aid justice in the sport when it is properly used," said Sporting coach Jorge Jesus.

But controversy raged in the Porto v Benfica match when VAR failed to validate a Porto goal that was incorrectly ruled out for offside, despite a defending player playing the scorer onside. It is thought that the video referee did not have the full view of the pitch – most camera angles showed only the action in the box – or had simply focused attention on the goalmouth and not seen the defender out near the touchline.

In another controversial VAR incident, a goal scored by Sporting against Feirense was chalked off for a foul long before the ball entered the net, after which Feirense had won back the ball then lost it again. The Portuguese refereeing board later admitted this was an incorrect decision.

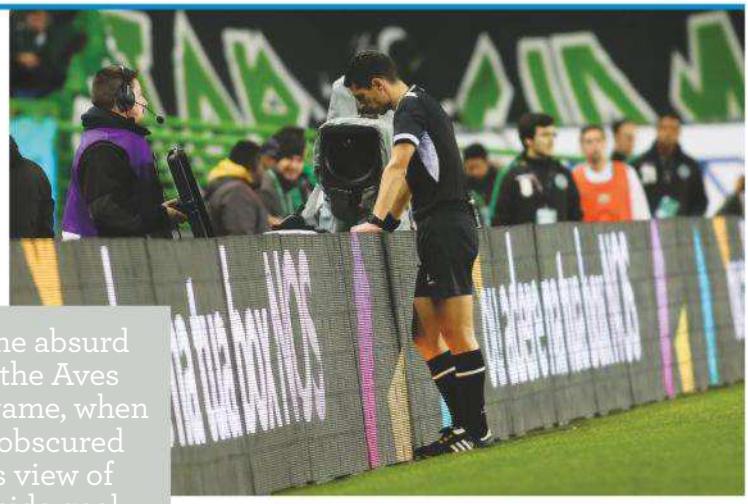
> There was the absurd situation in the Aves v Boavista game, when a giant flag obscured the camera's view of a clearly offside goal that incorrectly stood

Then there was the absurd situation in the Aves v Boavista game, when a giant fans' flag obscured the camera's view of a clearly offside goal that incorrectly stood.

It's safe to assume that most of these errors in the utilisation of VAR will be ironed out with experience, but the biggest issue remains when VAR should intervene. The Portuguese Football Federation clearly outlines the four instances when VAR shall be used – for goals if a foul or offside is suspected, for penalties, for red cards and for mistaken identity – but referees have been inconsistent in applying these guidelines.

VAR has not proven a panacea to the chronic suspicions of corrupt officiating in Portugal, and how and when it is used must be standardised. But it is recognised as a useful tool, nobody is calling for it to be scrapped, and fears of it taking too much time out of the game have proved unfounded.

Tom Kundert



Controversial...Luis Ferreira consults VAR during Sporting's game with Feirense

THE VIEW FROM ITALY

VAR adds to suspicion and drama

Just before half-time in the recent Milan derby, Internazionale's Mauro Icardi pounced on a clever through ball from Antonio Candreva to score the opening goal of the game.

Even if the match referee Marco Di Bello, not to mention most of the 78,000 spectators at the San Siro, had not noticed anything wrong, the Video Assistant Referee had.

Within seconds the VAR team had alerted Di Bello. A few seconds later, TV viewers were able to see a replay of Icardi's goal in which computer technology clearly showed that when Candreva struck his pass to Icardi, the Argentinian's left foot was clearly offside by a matter of inches. It was something that the naked eye could not possibly have seen, but it was still marginally offside, no question.

In a flash, the fate of the game had been turned upside down. The derby eventually finished goalless but who is to say what would have been the outcome had Icardi's 38th-minute goal been allowed to stand.

If Inter had gone in a goal up at half-time it could have made for a very different second half, and after the game Inter coach Luciano Spalletti inevitably expressed his reserves about the VAR's call, saying: "I am not going to be polemical about an offside of millimetres, particularly when we were told that in situations like this, the linesman's call would be decisive [in this case, the assistant's flag had stayed down]."

As the end of the Italian season approaches, scenes like this, not to mention managerial grumblings of the Spalletti variety, have become very familiar to fans and commentators alike. Like it or loathe it, VAR has arrived – and it is not going away.

Different opinion polls this season would suggest that 80 to 90 per cent of Italian fans approve of VAR, arguing that it has definitively limited "decisive" refereeing errors. And all available Serie A match analysis would appear to sustain this view, with the overall trend being that VAR has reduced result-changing errors from one in every three games to one in every 20 games.

Disallowed...Mauro Icardi's "goal" in the Milan derby

Clear...fans at the San Siro are made aware of VAR's intervention

Former international referee Roberto Rosetti is the man in charge of the Italian Football Federation's VAR project – and of FIFA's use of VAR in Russia this summer – and he has few doubts.

"It doesn't take much for a referee to make a wrong call, his positioning is not right, a player gets into his line of sight," argues Rosetti. "With the VAR, the margin of error is much reduced, being able to rewind the tape and go back in time allows the referee to put matters to right."

Those who have their reservations about the use of the VAR point to two major worries. Firstly, does the system not prompt too many interruptions and a serious loss of playing time? Secondly, does the regular recourse to off-the-pitch "arbitration" not undermine the match referee's authority? Overwhelmingly, the Italian experience thus far would seem to allay all such concerns.

Inevitably, VAR got off to a busy start

In charge...ex-referee Roberto Rosetti is head of the Italian Football Federation's VAR project

with officials keen to make full use of the new technology. In the first half of the season, there were five VAR "controls" per game but that has reduced to approximately three. Significantly, these controls have become much quicker, passing from a lengthy 2'35" in the opening three days to 1'15" as the season progressed.

All in all, that means that use of the VAR now eats up three to four minutes time. By comparison, top-level games on average lose nine through free-kicks, thanks to the protests, the referee's "line spray" routine and the inevitable fuss about setting up the defensive wall.

Interestingly, too, the Italian experience would suggest that the use of VAR has greatly improved player behaviour. By the halfway point of the season, no one had been sent off for protesting too strongly, largely because before the player could protest, the VAR had been summoned.

As for undermining the referee's authority, that is a more subtle and legitimate concern even if the Italian experience would suggest no loss of refereeing autonomy, authority or credibility. In the pre-VAR days, if an assistant drew the referee's attention to a foul or off-the-ball incident that he had missed, prompting the referee to sanction a player, no one would suggest that he had undermined the match ref. So why should he not be helped by the VAR?

Former international referee Nicola Rizzoli, the man who now selects referees for all Serie A fixtures, was asked about this problem by Sky Italia TV in relation to a penalty awarded by referee Fabrizio Pasqua in the Benevento-Juventus game in early April. When Berat Djimsiti of Benevento clattered into Juve's Miralem Pjanic just before half-time it looked to many to be a clear, if rather clumsy, penalty.

Pasqua, however, waved play on. Within seconds, VAR was on the line, suggesting that he should look at the replay, which he duly did, correcting his decision and awarding a penalty.

Rizzoli said: "If in his communication with the VAR [colleagues], the referee says that, 'look as far as I saw it, the defender touched the ball first' whilst the VAR says 'no, you've got that wrong, you should take a look at the replay', that is the classic situation in which both the VAR and the referee, together, reassess an incident.

"The video technology will be used only where there are clear and serious errors in decisive situations, limited to the four key areas – goals, penalties or not-penalties, red cards and mistaken identity."

Protest... Juventus players argue with ref Fabrizio Pasqua

However, it was pointed out that the referee had not consulted with VAR for the awarding of a second penalty to Juventus, this time for a foul on Gonzalo Higuain by Benevento midfielder, Nicolas Viola. In this second incident, it appeared that Higuain had exaggerated the impact of the tackle.

Rizzoli observed: "You could argue that the striker [Higuain] had accentuated the tackle and that he had gone looking for it, or perhaps that the defender's inexperience had prompted the foul.

"But fact is, the truth is out there on the pitch, where you see and understand what has happened. These are situations in which VAR will never intervene because the opinion [of the ref] is decisive in situations like this."

The VAR debate still has a long way to run. However, what is clear is that Italian football authorities have given a very green light to the introduction of VAR. Marcello Nicchi, president of the Italian Referees Association, put it this way at the halfway point in the season, stating: "The VAR is working well and it will get better in the coming months. In the meantime, we have become an example for all the other federations to follow. We are inundated with requests from other Federations to send them our referees to instruct in the use of VAR."

A final thought. Traditionalists argue that VAR goes against the spirit of the game in that you have to stop the action and review what has happened. However, that review process adds its own special theatre. It is football's answer to the final scene in Agatha Christie's Inspector Poirot stories where the inimitable Belgian detective finally reveals all.

It is supremely dramatic.

Paddy Agnew

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Bryan CRISTANTE

Age 23 (03.03.95), midfielder, Atalanta & Italy

In a sentence
On loan from Benfica, the Italy international is arguably the best all-round midfielder in Serie A at the moment and a hot-ticket item for all the top clubs in his homeland, as well as suitors in England and Spain.

What they say
Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini: "In the course of a year, he has made rapid progress. He will go far. The important thing is for him to keep working. He can become even better."

Umberto Marino, Atalanta's director of sport: "On joining us, Cristante seemed lost, but Gasperini did a wonderful job in making him believe in himself once more."

Aldo Dolcetti, former Milan youth-team coach: "He was a kid with great technical ability, no little physicality and a strong personality. I regarded him as a mix of Massimo Ambrosini and Riccardo Montolivo."

3 THREE THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT CRISTANTE

- He was named after the singer Bryan Ferry.
- Heavily criticised for selling him to Benfica in 2014, Milan supremo Adriano Galliani argued he had no choice as the club needed the cash that summer to complete the signing of Atalanta midfielder Giacomo Bonaventura.
- His father, Walter, was born in Toronto and the Canadian federation had always had hopes of selecting the youngster.

The story so far
The son of a Canadian father and Italian mother, he was born and brought up in the Friuli region of north-east Italy. A star pupil at the Milan academy, he was just 16 years and 278 days old when handed his first-team debut in a Champions League tie against Viktoria Plzen in December 2011. He competed in his first Serie A fixture in November 2013, against Chievo, but the following summer he was controversially allowed to leave, joining Portuguese side Benfica for €6million. However, he failed to settle at the Estadio da Luz and was equally disappointing during loan spells back in Italy with Palermo and Pescara. He then sealed a temporary posting at Atalanta in January 2017 and has not looked back since. He won his first cap in a World Cup qualifier against Macedonia in October.

The next step
Atalanta have the right to buy him at the end of this season for €4m and are more than likely to then sell him on to the highest bidder, hopefully for a profit of at least €30m. Juventus, Internazionale, Roma, Napoli, Atletico Madrid, Arsenal and Manchester United are all said to be interested.

Strengths
Times his runs into the opposition box well and is a composed finisher. Good in the air, he has a fine range of passing and demonstrates ball-winning prowess. He can play in any number of systems.

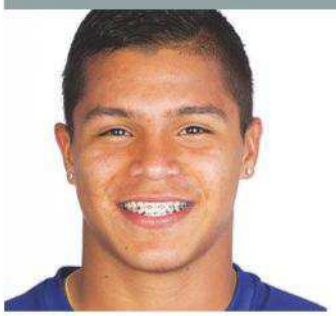
> "In the course of a year, he has made rapid progress. He will go far"
>
> Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini

Weaknesses
Not especially agile or quick over the ground, and can seem reluctant to shoot from distance.

Bruno VIANA

Age 23 (05.02.95), defender, Braga (Por) & Brazil
A temporary switch this season from Greek champions Olympiakos has worked out extremely well. He is emerging as one of most effective centre-backs in the Primeira Liga and has earned himself a five-year contract with Braga as of next season.

Cucho HERNANDEZ



Age 18 (22.04.99), striker, Huesca (Spa) & Colombia
With Watford but currently starring in the Spanish second-tier, he is quick, persistent and a deadly finisher. Barcelona are rumoured to be on his trail and the English club rate him in the €25m bracket.

Yann KARAMOH

Age 19 (08.07.98), winger, Internazionale (Ita) & France
Prised away from Caen last summer, he has made a big impact in Italy despite only being a bit-part player. France under-21 international of Ivorian lineage, at the end of his two-season deal Inter have the option to buy.

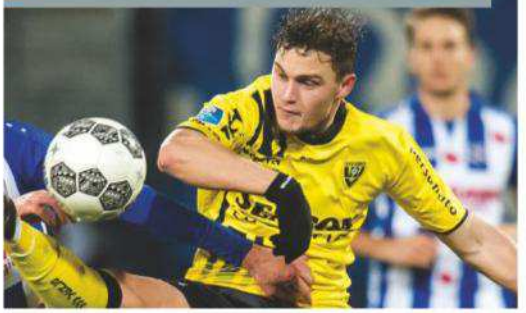
Riccardo ORSOLINI

Age 21, (24.01.97) winger, Bologna & Italy
Loaned out twice by Juventus this term, spending the first-half of the season with Atalanta – where he surprisingly had little game time – before moving to Bologna in January. He was the top scorer at the World Under-20 finals last year, netting five times.

Jacob BRUUN LARSEN

Age 19 (19.09.98), winger, Stuttgart (Ger) & Denmark
On loan from Borussia Dortmund, where he had been in sensational form for their all-conquering youth team, amassing industrial quantities of goals and assists. Began at Lyngby, a Danish club which has produced more than its fair share of internationals, among them Henrik Larsen and Dennis Rommedahl.

Damian VAN BRUGGEN



Age 22 (18.03.96), defender, VVV-Venlo & Holland
A Dutch under-21 centre-back or holding midfielder, farmed out last summer by PSV to Eredivisie new boys VVV. A very single-minded individual, he quit the Ajax youth system for PSV in 2016, citing better prospects in Eindhoven.

Saif-Eddine KHAOUI

Age 22 (27.04.95), midfielder, Troyes (Fra) & Tunisia
Franco-Tunisian number 10 whose playmaking has been one of the few positive notes in a season of under-achievement at Ligue 1 strugglers Troyes. The left-footer is due to return to Marseille in July, though he has been linked with several Bundesliga clubs and Istanbul BB. Paris-born, he recently threw in his lot with Tunisia and could feature at the forthcoming World Cup.

Marco FRIEDL

Age 20 (16.03.98), defender, Werder Bremen (Ger) & Austria
On Bayern Munich's books for over a decade, the left-back or central defender is in the final stages of his 18-month assignment at Bremen. A native of the Tirol region of western Austria, he was a striker early in his career and made his Champions League debut for Bayern last autumn, performing confidently in their 2-1 win at Anderlecht.

6

LEON BALOGUN

"We have 170 million football-loving people but also 170 million coaches"

The German-born defender is looking forward to helping Nigeria have a successful summer in Russia

You were born in Germany but your father is Nigerian. Was there much of Africa in your childhood? Did you go there on holiday? Did family come across from Nigeria?
No, no, no...we met with a lot of friends but not everyone was from Nigeria. We had friends from Ghana and Sierra Leone. There were a lot of mixed kids with a German mum and African dad, or the other way round, and at home we had some traditional African art. My father used to cook Nigerian food. There was some music, but that's about it. But he gave me his African vibes, his mentality, and that's the biggest part for me.

Did you ever think about the possibility one day of having to choose between Germany and Nigeria for your international career?
I was dreaming of that and I'm happy that it worked out that way and that it did happen.

What was your first contact with the Nigerian Football Federation?
I just got a call from Stephen Keshi. He was the coach at that time. I was playing at [Fortuna] Dusseldorf at the time. It was one night, about 11pm, I heard his voice and said to myself: "It's about to happen now." I was prepared a little because there was a journalist, who was a close friend of Keshi, who told me that he likes the way I play and that I'm going to get a call-up.

Was there a sense of apprehension because you were going to a culture that was very different from what you were used to?
I was very excited because there were some big names in the squad, but also I wasn't sure how they were going to react. Most of them wouldn't know me, but I was going to be with them, sit around with them. It was kind of awkward when we met up for the first time, and also we didn't go first to Nigeria but met up in Atlanta, so that took a little bit away from the excitement. But just to be around all those experienced and big international players for Nigeria was very exciting, somehow intimidating. But I think I coped quite well.

Struggle...his club side, Mainz, are in a relegation battle this season

Who helped you settle in?
The first time everyone was quite distant but the second time it was Tony Ujah, who has joined our team [Mainz] and John Ogu, who plays in Israel.

You made your debut against Mexico in 2014 but suffered a bad injury in the game...
I broke my foot. That cost me participation in the last World Cup, in 2014. It was quite tough, but I think I bounced back even better.

After you broke your foot, did Keshi let you know you would be in future Nigeria plans?
Yes definitely. He called every two or three weeks to see how I was and how my recovery was going. They were still hoping for me to join the team [at the World Cup in Brazil] and I had hopes at first too, but I realised it would take me some time to heal. By the time the team went to the preparation camp, I knew I would have to miss out. After Nigeria were eliminated by France he said at the press conference that he missed me, so that was a boost.

Your second game was the first time you had ever been to Nigeria. What was that like?
It was really nice. I love the mentality, everyone is always happy, they have this relaxed approach. Sometimes, when you grow up in Germany and everything is really structured, then sometimes you can get a bit mad because in Nigeria things can go a bit slow. People are calmer, more relaxed when they do their things but still they are very serious about everything. But, at the same time, I enjoy these happy times because no matter how little some people have got, they seem so happy. That always humbles me. And, of course, I like to be around the team because we always have fun. It's always nice, at the table for dinner, lunch, breakfast. We always laugh, make jokes. If we are training, we are very serious, very focused. But, yes, it's just cool vibes all the time.

When you went to Africa for the first time, did something stir inside of you?
Somehow, yes, because people show you a lot of love. It's always amazing, When I first touched down, I was, "OK, this is Nigeria, I'm here for the first time...finally!" I was also proud to be there.

Did a lot of relatives come out to see you?
No, because the relationships in my family are not too strong. That's why I hadn't been to Nigeria before I went to the national team. It's like that sometimes. It's either one big happy family or you have some fights. My father tried to keep me out of that. I have some cousins in London. That's about it.

Obviously it's always important for new players to make an impression with the

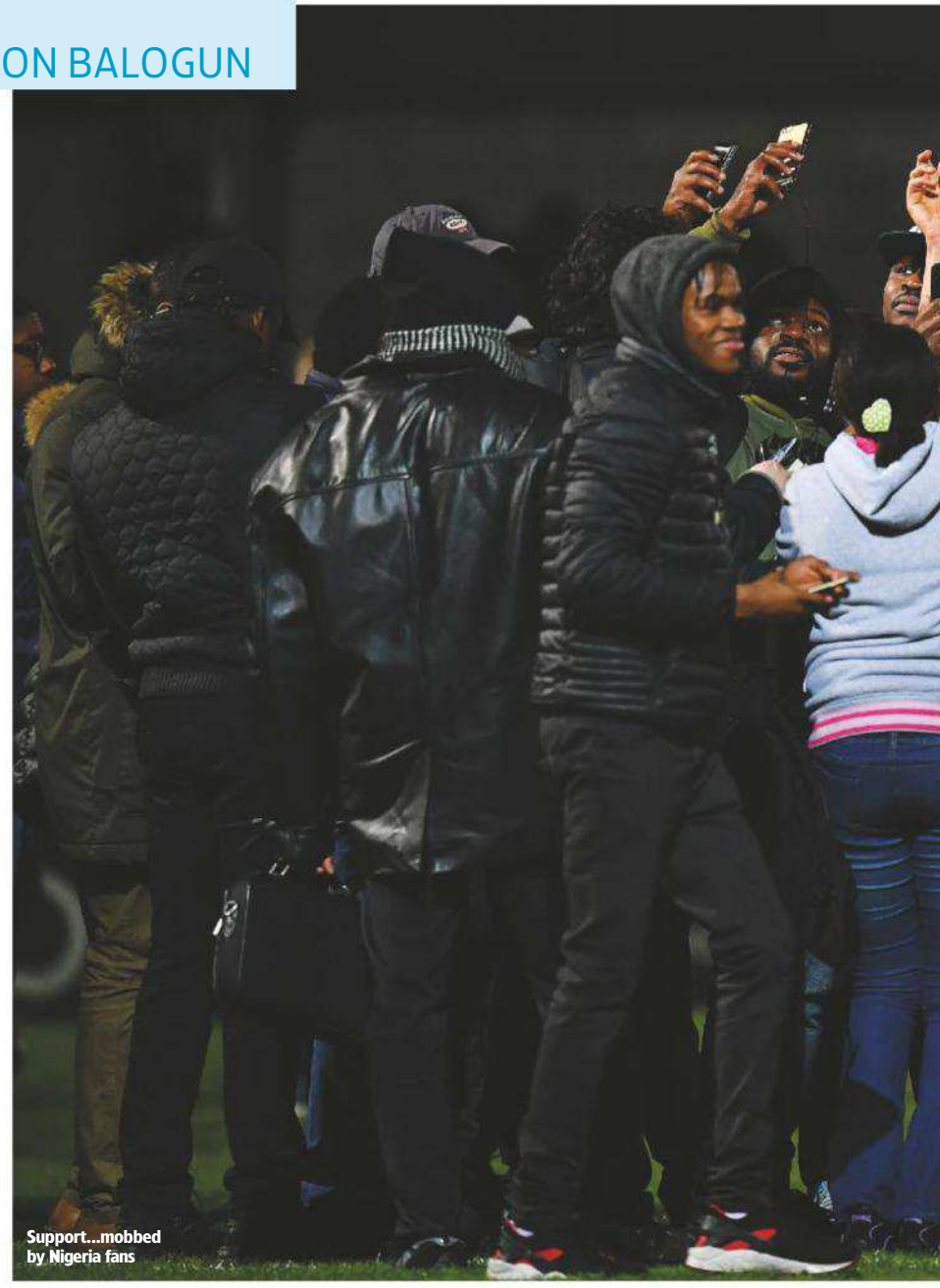
PHOTO: Lukasz Kalinowski/REX/Shutterstock

Nigeria fans on their home debut. What was your sense on how it went for you?
Oh it was good, very, very good. I remember I played right full-back [against Chad in 2015], I got the ball deep in our own half, I did a small crossover, nothing special and the crowd went wild. I think they liked the way I interpreted my position because I always like to attack if I play in the right full-back position. And they were very happy. The coach was happy and satisfied, but ever since I made my debut against Mexico the Nigerians have really supported me. I can't complain about a lack of support, or a lack of love, or however you want to call it.

And you have worn the captain's armband...
It was an honour, amazing, a great feeling. Everybody considers Nigeria a real football nation and if you consider there are 170 million watching you, leading the national team onto the field, that's quite a big thing.

Nigerian support seems suffocating at times, such is the desire to win. What's that pressure like for you?
It gives you a boost but it also gives you pressure because you know that if you lose then the Nigerians are not happy. This could affect you. I don't think they would harm us in any way but you also don't want them to be angry with you or mad at the situation! It always gives you a little extra boost to do your best. So it's positive but you also don't want to get into trouble with the fans. We have 170million football-loving people but also 170million coaches.

Nigeria were in a tough group yet qualified for a place in Russia with ease. Were you a little surprised with how easily it went?
I wouldn't say surprised, but the coach [Gernot Rohr], when he first came, told us "nobody is expecting us to survive and to come out of this group as a World Cup contestant". But he told us from the beginning that it was all about team spirit because we have such quality in the side. From the start he said we were at least on the same level as Algeria and Cameroon. It's just that people from outside were saying they are not going to make it, they haven't qualified for the last two Nations Cup finals and Nigeria isn't Nigeria anymore. I think we proved them wrong. As I said, our team spirit I think was the key – and the coach, he really put focus on that point, growing together as a strong unit, and that's what we did. The rest I think is just the individual quality that each and everyone brings into this pot of the team game after game. Some games felt easy, in fact – once we were on the right track, after scoring one or two goals. But before every game we were really, really focused. At the same time you could feel there was also huge respect towards Algeria, towards Cameroon and even towards Zambia. To me, Zambia was the toughest opponent of them all. I only played in the second game against them but they were young and ambitious and to me they were the biggest surprise in this group.


Support...mobbed by Nigeria fans

Challenge...battling with Algeria's Islam Slimani (left) during qualification

Beating African champions Cameroon 4-0 was obviously a key result...
Before that game we were like, "wow this is going to be tough". The excitement level was big. We knew we had a big chance and we did not want to go to the game in Yaounde having lost. At the same time we knew that we are very strong at our home ground, especially with the crowd behind us and, yes, the way it went was unbelievable. Beating Cameroon 4-0 – they

had just won the African Nations Cup – was like wow! But if I look back at that game we were so good that day.

What has Gernot Rohr's impact been like?
He's different, he's German, and it's maybe something Africans are not used to, but he is very focused on discipline. He needs structures: his way of thinking, his way of working. I think it gets annoying for some of the players and some of the staff sometimes because they are just not used to it because everything has to be 100 percent on point. If one thing is a bit left, he's like "no, no, I'm not having it". But it gives us the structure in the games and I think you can clearly see his handwriting. I think he's done very, very well. He's very calm, he is experienced. He also knows how to handle the African mentality.

How did you feel when you knew you had qualified for the World Cup?
I cried! It was just overwhelming. I don't know, it was tears of joy. I think everybody can relate to that feeling. Still, even up to now, I can't believe that it is going to happen, that I'm going to play in a World Cup, and I think we've a lot of players who feel the same.

Where were you when the draw was made?
I was outside on the pitch. I didn't see the draw on TV live, I just checked my phone when I came back to the changing room. The physio and players who had stayed inside said to me: "Do you want to know? Do you want to know?" Then my Argentinian team-mate Pablo De Blasis said to me: "Hey Leon! We are playing in the same group again." I said: "Oh no, come on, every time the same group, this is getting boring!" But seriously I think it's a nice challenge.

> "I know a lot of Nigerians expect us to bring home the World Cup but you have to be realistic"

How do you feel about being drawn in a group with Argentina, Croatia and Iceland?
It's similar to the group we had during the qualifiers, one of the most exciting groups I think and very competitive. Argentina is a team that stand for themselves if you look at their players and their individual quality, but they are beatable. I'm very optimistic.

Favourite...Lionel Messi will be waiting in Russia

And Balogun versus Messi...
Yes! It's going to be interesting. I'm really looking forward to it. He's one of my favourite players, I love to watch him play but when we play them I have to forget about that.

But still make sure you get his shirt at the end of the game...
"[Laughs] This shirt a lot of players will ask for. I might have to bribe a few. We will have to find a solution. Maybe I can get a message to Messi that he mustn't just bring one jersey but bring 11 so everybody is happy afterwards!

And what about Croatia and Iceland?
I think Iceland we'll have to take very seriously. They had an amazing campaign during the qualifiers and at the European Championships they performed very well. They have been a big surprise. Croatia have great individual quality and on a good day can beat the best teams. It's one of the toughest groups and we have to prove that we are tougher than Iceland and Croatia, and better also than Argentina. But it's going to be hard work.

Nigeria have been past the first round at previous World Cups. Can you get as far as the semi-finals in Russia?
Yes, why not? We can be a big surprise. I'm not saying we are going to be one but the chances are there. We have great individual quality as well, especially in the attack, and if we can fix a few things in certain areas of our game then we have a chance to go far. I know that a lot of Nigerians expect us to bring home the World Cup but you have to be realistic because there are a lot of teams with a legitimate claim to raise the trophy at the end of the tournament. We will see. The key will be that we perform as a team, and once that is achieved then the players can bring in their individual quality. If the defence does a good job, the rest won't have to focus too much on defending and can think about the attacks.

Interview by Mark Gleeson

Glenn Moore

Man United move with the times

Old Trafford applies to join WSL2

Promotion...a Girls Football Development programme at Old Trafford in 2015

Despite a heritage dating back more than a century, modern women's football is a youthful sport – and the growing pains were evident as the northern hemisphere moved into spring.

There was a significant step forward as Manchester United, arguably the world's biggest football brand, finally decided to start a professional team for the world's biggest gender. But there was also a stumble as Gianni Infantino, in a rare setback as president, had his plan for a world league thrown out by FIFA Council.

Opposition to Infantino's proposal came mainly from European nations, and that was in part driven by scheduling issues for clubs. The arrival of Manchester United, following Juventus and Manchester City, and recent investment at Barcelona, Chelsea, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain, has changed the landscape. Outside north America, the clubs pay the stars' salaries and increasingly, as with the men, resent losing them for internationals.

There is a need for more competition outside the established nations. Women's teams in major football countries often go a calendar year or more without playing a single game. In Europe, however, demands on players are prompting protests from clubs, with Manchester City manager Nick Cushing and Chelsea boss Emma Hayes both bemoaning the schedule as the season headed towards a climax.

That may be eased by yet another league restructuring in England, although that is not the main motivation behind the FA's decision to make the Women's Super League full-time from 2018-19, rebrand WSL2 as a part-time Women's Championship, and the regional third tier the Women's National League. Ostensibly it was to further raise playing standards with a view to cementing the national team's progress. But the requirement for clubs to re-apply for their licences had the happy "accident" of enabling a new club – like, say, Manchester United – to leapfrog the laborious process of having to win promotions through the pyramid.

Setback.... Gianni Infantino

Manchester City took a similar opportunity, and while that was controversial – as it meant the forced relegation of pioneer club Doncaster Belles – it proved successful. City quickly became England's leading team with unparalleled levels of integration between the male and female sections of the club. They have also focused on developing British talent.

> Only Real Madrid, of the biggest European clubs, continue to resist completely the idea of having a women's team – although some, such as Milan ladies, are amateur

Among those players is Isobel Christiansen, signed from Birmingham City, previously of Everton, but originally an academy player at Manchester United.

Christiansen was a United fan, but their youth programme – a necessary condition of receiving funding for their boys academy – ended at 18. So, like Katie Zelem (Juventus, via Liverpool) and Gabby George (Everton), she left Old Trafford to have a professional career. United did have an amateur women's team until 2005, but the Glazers scrapped it when they took over.

With gender equality making headlines, United had begun to look out of touch, especially when contrasted with City. And so Ed Woodward, executive vice-chairman, announced that the Old Trafford club had applied to WSL2. Only Real Madrid, of the biggest European clubs, continue to resist completely – although some, such as Milan ladies, are amateur.

But Manchester United are not guaranteed a place in the Women's Championship. With most current WSL2 clubs successfully taking up the option of applying there are not many slots available. United are competing with a raft of clubs ranging from Premier League rivals Leicester City to non-League Lewes, the club that famously pays male and female players equally. However, it would be a major surprise if United, who referenced the

FA's help in guiding them through the process, did not win selection. The verdict will be revealed by the FA in late May.

While United plan, Manchester City play – and their squad is showing signs of fatigue. Having nine players called up for England's demanding trans-Atlantic trip to the SheBelieves Cup exacerbated the situation, and Cushing made the point after their FA WSL Cup Final defeat by Arsenal, which was played within days of the squad's return, that none of their opponents travelled.

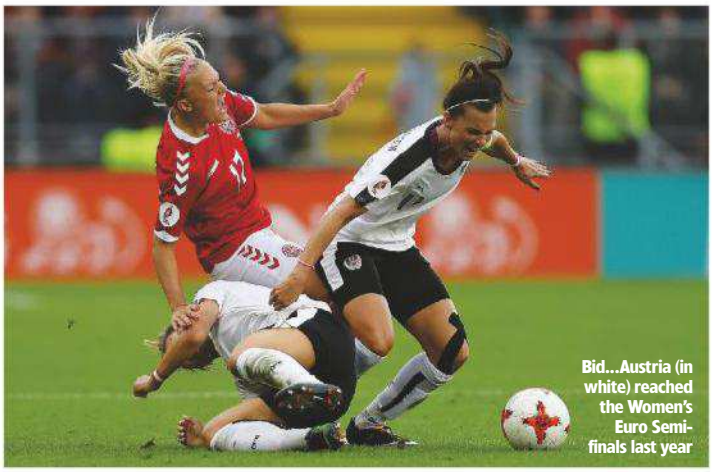
That was some of the context to European resistance to Infantino's proposal for an international women's league. He has presumably looked at the SheBelieves Cup – and larger invitational tournaments such as the Cyprus Cup and Algarve Cup – and thought FIFA should have a slice of the action.

That some teams need a reason to play matches is undeniable. Honduras, Panama and Tunisia – whose men's teams are all going to the World Cup – have not played in the past 18 months, while two other qualifiers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, have no team at all. The 2016 African women's champions, Nigeria, did not play a single game in 2017.

Infantino's proposal, which would have involved regional qualifying tournaments then a finals, has been sent back for further consultation – this time involving the clubs. WS

United fan...City's Isobel Christiansen

Round-up



Bid...Austria (in white) reached the Women's Euro Semi-finals last year

TRIO BID FOR EURO FINALS

England, Austria and Hungary have bid to host the Women's 2021 European Championship. England – who hosted the finals in 2005 – and Austria both reached the semi-finals of Euro 2017, held in Holland, while Hungary have never qualified. UEFA will make a decision in December.

Through... Chelsea's Ramona Bachmann

ENGLISH CLUBS BREAK NEW GROUND IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

England will have two European semi-finalists for the first time after Manchester City completed a 7-3 aggregate win over Sweden's Linkoping and Chelsea saw off Montpellier of France 5-1. In a repeat of last season's semi-final, City now meet holders Lyon, who beat Barcelona 3-1 on aggregate. Chelsea face Wolfsburg, who have knocked them out in the last two seasons. The Germans beat Slavia Prague 6-1. The semi-finals will be played on April 21-22 and 28-29.

ARSENAL WIN WSL LEAGUE CUP

In an early success for new Australian manager Joe Montemurro, Arsenal beat Manchester City in the Final of the FA WSL Cup. A first-half goal from Dutch striker Vivianne Miedema was enough to secure a record fifth success for the club in a competition which is for WSL clubs. The two teams were kept apart in the women's FA Cup semi-finals, with holders City playing Chelsea, and Arsenal meeting Everton.

Cup winners ...Arsenal

NOT A REAL DERBY IN MADRID, BUT STILL POPULAR

Real Madrid may not have a team but there is still a Madrid derby in Spain, and it still draws a crowd. Madrid CFF were formed by a Real-supporting businessman who did not want his daughter playing for Atletico, so he created his own team which play in all white. Formed in 2010 they won promotion to the top flight last season, and with daughter Paola Ulloa in goal they drew 2-2 at Wanda Metropolitan in front of more than 22,000 fans.

Return...Abby Erceg

ERCEG BACK FOR KIWIS

Former national captain Abby Erceg has returned to international duty for New Zealand a year after quitting in protest at a lack of support from the national federation. The North Carolina Courage defender said progress was being made on several fronts in resolving problems.

PRESS HEADS FOR SWEDEN

US international Christen Press rejoined Swedish club Gothenburg after refusing to play for Houston Dash. Press was traded to Houston from Chicago Red Stars in January but declined to move. Unable to play elsewhere in NWSL she rejoined a club she played for in 2012.

World Soccer vintage 20 years ago

May 1998

German skipper reveals past problems in the squad

Preview...thoughts on the upcoming World Cup

With thoughts turning towards the summer's World Cup finals, cover star Jurgen Klinsmann shared his hopes for France 98 in an exclusive interview with Gerry Cox.

"This is a squad we have been building since the 1994 World Cup and won the [1996] European Championship with," said Germany's captain. "The base is more or less the same.

"And more importantly the spirit is very, very good. That is the biggest difference between us now and four years ago."

The 33-year-old – who was back for a second spell at Tottenham Hotspur, on loan from Sampdoria – then went on to spill the beans on divisions within the German camp at the tournament in the USA.

"We had within the team a couple of problems between players," he revealed. "I don't want to name names, but we had problems on a personal level."

Things got so bad that midfielder Steffen Effenberg was sent home from the US, but Klinsmann felt that national coach Berti Vogts had only grown stronger after the problems four years earlier.

"He definitely learned from that and now looks closely at the character of the players, at their spirit," explains Klinsmann. "And that's how he decides who he takes.

"Maybe there are better players who will be left behind, but Berti won't take them because he's anxious not to have problems in the squad." A World Cup winner himself in 1990, Klinsmann felt Brazil would be the team to beat in France and argued: "There is no doubt they are favourites because they have exceptional talents who can decide a game, outstanding players like Ronaldo, Romario and Denilson.

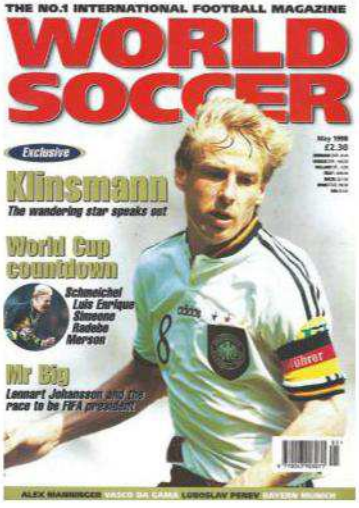
"They have a very, very good team. But you still can beat them and that's what we realised when we played them in March.

"We could have won the game 2-1. They won it with a late goal and deserved it, but it showed us that even the number one team in the world is beatable.

"The key is to really concentrate and not give them any space up front for 90 minutes, not just for 88."

Despite some in his homeland suggesting his form did not warrant a place in Germany's 22 for the finals – "it hasn't been a good season for me at all," he admitted – Klinsmann would score three times in France before his side lost 3-0 to Croatia in the quarter-finals.

Brazil, as he had pointed out, were indeed the team to beat in France that summer – as the hosts proved with a 3-0 victory in the Final. WS



WORLD CUP98

FRANCE 98

THE MEN WHO MATTER

Jurgen Klinsmann

HE is the only current player to have won the World Cup, captained his country to the European Championship, picked up domestic and European trophies galore and gained countless personal awards.

He has scored almost 50 goals in more than 100 internationals for Germany, has played for some of the leading clubs in the world's strongest leagues and is widely acclaimed as a model professional as well as one hell of a nice guy.

So why are the doubters closing in on Jurgen Klinsmann? His record alone sets him apart as one of the world's greatest players, and he has been at the highest level for the past 10 years.

But as he approaches his 34th birthday, two weeks after the World Cup Final, his critics argue that he is not the same world-class striker who took English football by storm three years ago and captained Germany to the European Championship a year later.

That Euro 96 triumph came even though Klinsmann's place in the Final was in doubt until the last minute because of an injury that was thought to seriously threaten Germany's chances. Now the knockers wonder if he is worth a place in the squad, let alone the starting 11.

Klinsmann is the first to admit that he has had more than his share of personality clashes. His love affair with England and Tottenham finished the first time amid much acrimony in 1995. He then had a running battle with captain Lothar Matthaus and coach Giovanni Trapattoni at Bayern Munich, fell out with Sampdoria's coach Vujadin Boskov and moved to Tottenham again, only to have a highly public row with coach Christian Gross.

He has also had serious injury problems, with a torn ankle ligament disrupting his short spell at Sampdoria, followed by a broken jaw soon after his return to Spurs. Yet Klinsmann will still be one of the highest-profile players on show at France 98, and he is confident that he can put all his problems behind him to help Germany win a fourth World Cup.

"I am looking forward to France with a lot of excitement and confidence about our chances. This is a squad we have been building since the 1994 World Cup and won the European Championship with. The base is more or less the same, and more importantly the spirit is very, very good.

"That is the biggest difference between us now and four years ago. Our problem then was that we had a good team and were good enough to win the World Cup, but we didn't have the spirit.

"We had within the team a couple of problems between players. I don't want to name names, but we had problems on a personal level."

Klinsmann is too diplomatic to single out Matthaus and Steffen Effenberg, who was sent home, but he feels that coach Berti Vogts learned an important lesson about team harmony in America.

"He definitely learned from that and now looks closely at the character of players, at their spirit, and that's how he decides who he takes. Maybe there are better players who will be left behind, but Berti won't take them because he's anxious not to have problems in the squad. He looks more at the character in many ways than the quality of the player."

Klinsmann believes this is what will make Germany hard to beat. "All the players stick together and have a lot of respect for each other. We also have a manager who is very open-minded to any discussions and wants to know what the players think, what their opinions are. It's this kind of working together that gives us a good feeling going into the World Cup."

Of course, Germany go as European Champions after their success in Euro 96. Is this side any stronger? "It's difficult to say. In terms of quality, we feel we can cope with all the other nations. In a tournament, the difference will be made by the performance on the day and a bit of luck.

"The players need to be well-prepared mentally as well as physically. I think it's part of our mentality that when a big tournament comes up we are able to concentrate on the right moment. History has shown that we are a good tournament side."

Nevertheless, he goes along with the popular view that reigning world champions Brazil start as favourites. "There is no doubt they are favourites because they have exceptional talents who can decide a game, outstanding players like Ronaldo, Romario and Denilson. They have a very, very good team. But you still can beat them and that's what we realised when we played them in March. We could have won the game 2-1. They won it with a late goal and deserved it, but it showed us that even the number one team in the world is beatable. The key is to really concentrate and not give them any space up front for 90 minutes, not just for 88.

"That means it should be a very open tournament in France, with the usual five or six contenders. As well as Brazil, there is Argentina from South America and the big European names like Italy, England, Germany and France, who have home advantage.

"Spain also have a very strong side at the moment, as well as Yugoslavia, and there are bound to be surprises. A lot of people expect a challenge from the African teams, and Nigeria are the strongest of them.

"They won the Olympic title. That shows they are now capable of coping with the big countries and have improved a lot tactically, which is where they always had problems.

"Physically, they have no problems and their discipline is getting better and better because all their players are playing in Europe. That's where they learn how to cope with situations and that's why I expect them to play a big part in this tournament."

What about England – have they lost momentum recently? "I think you have to look at the squad, not at the results of friendly games – they don't matter. Friendlies are just to bring the squad together, to try out things and bring in young players like Michael Owen. This is the time to give those players a chance, to see how they can cope with international pressure. But these games don't tell you anything about the real quality of the team.

"If you look at the England squad, at the quality of the players, they have to be one of the favourites. I'm sure that Glenn Hoddle will get them right when it matters. But now you have to give him the opportunity to try things and risk a couple of bad results, which is no problem at all. Once the World Cup starts, nobody talks about friendly games from a few months ago. Nobody cares about them.

"But the reaction is the same in Germany. If we don't win our friendlies, they criticise us. You just have to live with it because expectations in the traditional football countries are the highest. They just expect you to win every game you play at the top level, which is impossible.

"Even in the qualifying rounds, Germany often struggle because it's just not the same feeling as the tournament. We had a couple of bad results this time and were lucky against countries like Albania. But once you get to the finals, it really counts."

At USA 94, Germany's quarter-final defeat by Bulgaria was a major disappointment for them – if not the rest of the world – but Klinsmann has had worse moments in international football.

"The European Championship Final against Denmark in 1992 was worse for me. We were the favourites and we just threw it out of the window.

"But 1994 was a big disappointment because we should have won that game against Bulgaria. We were leading 1-0 when the ref disallowed a second goal from Rudi Voller which was perfectly good. Then they came back into the game with Stoichkov's free-kick, which went right in the middle of the goal. Then there was another mistake and all of a sudden there wasn't enough time to put it right. We were just shocked because we thought we would go through.

"That's the cruel thing about the tournament once you get through to the knockout stages. You can be consistent all the way through, but if you lose concentration just once, you are out. It's great for the competition because it makes it more exciting. But we lost and we got a lot of stick for that."

It was a different story four years earlier, when a 25-year-old Klinsmann became a World Cup-winner at Italia 90. "That was an incredible experience because the atmosphere was similar to England in 1996. I played alongside Matthaus and Andy Brehme at Inter Milan at the time, so the games at the San Siro were like playing at home, especially when the crowd was 90 per cent German. It was like having home games all the way through, even in the Final.

"Because Argentina had beaten Italy in the semi-final, we had all the Italians on our side against them in the Final, particularly because there were all sorts of stories going round about Maradona at that time. The Italians fans really helped the Germans, and it

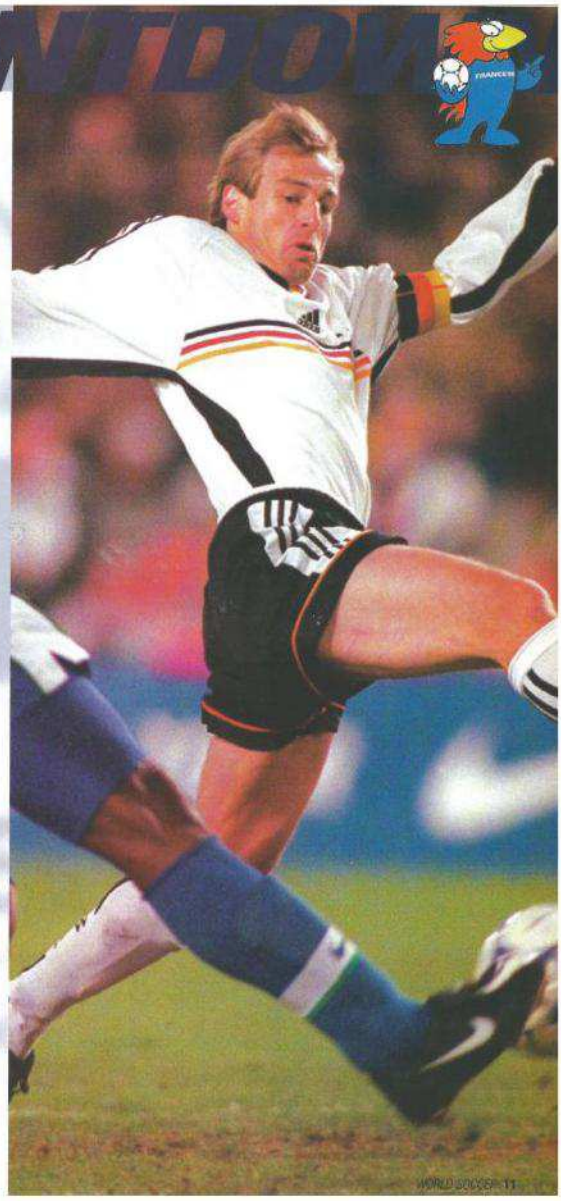
'The team spirit is very, very good. I don't want to name names but in 1994 we had problems...'

"We had within the team a couple of problems between players. I don't want to name names, but we had problems on a personal level"

Klinsmann on Germany's 1994 squad

COUNTDOWN

Germany's captain, described by his national coach Berti Vogts as a "talisman", talks to Gerry Cox



was a fantastic experience to win that competition."

But that was eight years ago, and Klinsmann knows this will be his last chance to recapture that feeling. "I am part of an older generation of strikers who will be playing in their last World Cup, people like Bebeto, Romario, Stoichkov and even my old partner Teddy Sheringham. This year, there is a new generation coming up, great young players such as Ronaldo, Raul, Del Piero, and possibly Owen. That's going to make it very interesting."

But he will not let go easily. Like Mark Twain, reports of his demise are somewhat premature and Klinsmann is running into form and fitness at a good time for both club and country.

"I'm coming along step by step. Every week I get sharper and faster and it is very, very important that I get my full pace back. I knew it would take a long time because the doctors told me after my ligament injury in the autumn that I had to be very patient, and that it could be three or four months before I had my full speed back.

"The specialists said I could play within six to eight weeks but it would take a lot longer to be 100 per cent right. Then when I came to Spurs I missed another month because of a broken jaw. But my fitness is finally coming back and I'm now very confident because I see the progress every week. It gives me a relaxed feeling approaching my last tournament."

A successful World Cup would certainly confound the critics and crown what has been a turbulent year for the personable German. "It hasn't been a good season for me at all," he admits. "It started to go wrong when they changed the coach at Sampdoria. I had gone there to be with Menotti, the Argentinian coach, with whom I had a good relationship. When I got injured, he just said to me: 'Be patient – it will come back, it's no problem.'

"But in that period, they changed the manager and I had a few problems because Boskov was not honest with me, he lied to me. I couldn't take that, because I can't build towards the World Cup with a relationship with a manager that is not working out. It makes you unsettled and mentally you are not free. That's why I took the decision to leave the club."

From frying pan to fire is how most would describe his journey back to London. Having made it clear that the old enmity between himself and Spurs chairman Alan Sugar was long gone, Klinsmann then had a very public row with the club's Swiss coach, Christian Gross. After a week or so of Tottenham's dirty linen being given a thorough public airing, a form of peace broke out at White Hart Lane. The news that he would be leaving at the end of the season allowed him to draw a line under the controversy and focus on his game.

"After the discussions I had with Christian, I decided to relax and just be quiet, just concentrate on my game. My job is working on the pitch and every training session and to play games as well as I can, and that's what I'm doing now."

And if that is good enough for Tottenham and Germany, then Jurgen Klinsmann will be everyone's favourite superstar once again.

Also in this issue...

p28 Also looking ahead to the World Cup was Keir Radnedge, who reported on a referees' seminar in Gressy, north of Paris. He explained how officials were being briefed on new laws to deal with the tackle from behind and what will "guarantee a red card at the finals in France and throughout the rest of the world from the start of July".

p32 In Spain, Barcelona's Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal – who had been subjected to "Cheesehead Go Home" banners – was winning over the fans by leapfrogging Real Madrid at the top of La Liga. "They now welcome him so enthusiastically that past and present are about alike as chalk and cheesehead," wrote Graham Turner.

p38 Roy Kitson explained how "these are troubled times for football in Northern Ireland" following what he called a "Black Weekend". At Windsor Park, Glentoran had three players sent off and their manager, Roy Coyle, was attacked at half-time as they lost 3-0 to Belfast rivals Linfield. After the match, "there were more disgraceful scenes between 'supporters,' and it seems certain police will take exemplary action against players and fans involved in the fighting".

p45 Tim Vickery profiled Brazilian side Vasco da Gama, who were hoping to celebrate their 100th anniversary by lifting the Libertadores Cup for the first time. But the domestic champions had made a poor start to their continental campaign as they were "without Edmundo [who had joined Fiorentina] and injured midfielder Juninho". Vickery explained: "International strikers Donizete and Luisao have been brought in to help the cause, but both have struggled as their team's lack of ability in midfield takes its toll."

10 years ago

Three days after Real Madrid are crowned La Liga champions by beating Osasuna 2-1, Barcelona announce that Frank Rijkaard is leaving his role as coach and will be replaced by B-team boss Pep Guardiola.

20 years ago

At the end of his first full season as manager of Arsenal, Arsene Wenger's side beat Newcastle United 2-0 in the FA Cup Final – with goals from Marc Overmars and Nicolas Anelka – to complete the domestic double.

30 years ago

A header from Lawrie Sanchez and a penalty save by Dave Beasant from John Aldridge – the first-ever in an FA Cup Final at Wembley – create one of the biggest upsets in the competition's history as Wimbledon beat Liverpool 1-0.

40 years ago

Michel Platini collects the first major trophy of his career, scoring the only goal of the game as Nancy beat Nice 1-0 in the French Cup Final to win the tournament for the first time in the club's history.

50 years ago

On an emotional night at Wembley Stadium, Matt Busby's Manchester United become European champions after beating Benfica 4-1 in the Final, 10 years after the Munich air crash.

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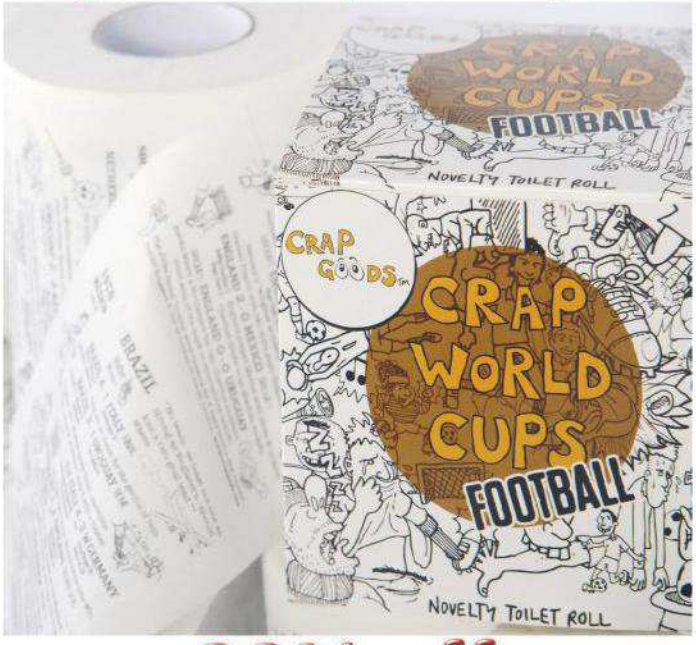

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World Service

INCORPORATING Global diary

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

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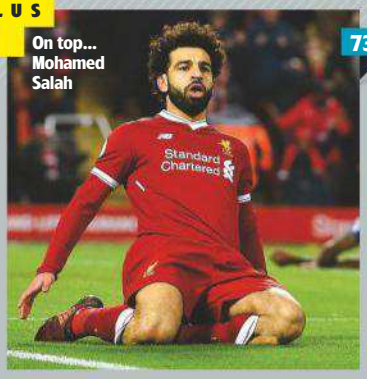
PLUS



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Brazil

TIM VICKERY

Young stars set to shine

Talent on tap despite the problems

In March, 17-year-old Vinicius Junior came off the bench in a crunch Libertadores Cup game in Ecuador and scored twice to turn probable defeat for Flamengo against Emelec into victory.

The following day, Rodrygo of Santos, who is a few months younger than Vinicius Junior, came up with a superb strike of his own against experienced Uruguayan opposition in Nacional.

Brazilian football's capacity to keep unearthing such precocious talent is reason enough to pay attention to the national championship – in spite of the competition's many faults.

One of those problems is the calendar. Bizarre political considerations turn Brazil's domestic season into a permanent battle to fit three litres into a two-litre bottle; a challenge made all the more acute in a World Cup year, which obliges a month's pause, and for this reason the 2018 league campaign kicks off in mid-April.

Yet despite the shorter build-up, a quarter of the top-flight clubs have already found time to part company with their coach. The weirdest example is that of Atletico Mineiro, where Thiago Larghi was appointed on a caretaker basis, with the club stressing that they are not looking for a permanent coach.

Atletico were the first winners of the Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A, back in 1971, but have not lifted the trophy since, while their great Belo Horizonte rivals, Cruzeiro, were champions in 2013 and 2014 – which are the only two campaigns in the past 15 years in which the title has eluded the traditional giants of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Over time, inequalities in the distribution of TV money and the substitution of the play-offs with a league format in 2004 have reduced the space for surprises and the title race has become more predictable. Last year, for example, the first three places went

Interesting... Rogerio Micale

Talent...Flamengo teenager Vinicius Junior (centre)

KEY DATES

Season starts April 15
Season ends December 1

to clubs from the state of Sao Paulo, with Corinthians winners for the second time in three years and defending champions Palmeiras runners-up.

These old rivals make an interesting contrast. **Corinthians** have financial problems, with their new stadium a clear burden, but Fabio Carille's side have a solid, well-established model of play – although they are finding it very hard to replace centre-forward Jo, who was last season's outstanding player. Roger Machado's **Palmeiras**, meanwhile, are still searching for the right blend, but with wealthy sponsors and revenue coming in from their impressive new stadium they can afford a squad of considerable depth.

Third place last year went to **Santos**, the port close to Sao Paulo, but a repeat performance might be tough. They seem to be going through a transitional phase and the choice of Jair Ventura as coach is surely motivated by his good work with meagre resources at Botafogo.

Sao Paulo, who completed a hat-trick of consecutive titles a decade ago, have slipped badly. Once an example of competent administration, they now seem to be mired in permanent chaos, spitting out coach after coach. Diego Aguirre of Uruguay has recently been appointed, with his record in promoting young talent part of the explanation.

Rio de Janeiro has not lifted the trophy since 2012, and only **Flamengo** would seem to be in serious contention this time. Normally mired in financial problems, the current administration have worked hard to put the accounts in order – but not hard enough in re-enforcing the slow group of centre-backs at the disposal of Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, and this would seem the main impediment to a title challenge.

The finances of **Fluminense**, meanwhile, have fallen over a cliff and it will take all the experience of Abel Braga to prevent a young squad being drawn into relegation danger. Similarly, **Vasco da Gama**, under Ze Ricardo, and **Botafogo**, who are led by the interesting Alberto Valentim, are cut-price, modest outfits who would be delighted just to qualify for next year's Libertadores.

Brazil's current national coach, Tite, and almost all of his recent predecessors are from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. Given the importance of the region to Brazilian football, it is striking that the two Porto Alegre giants have managed just one title – Gremio's in 1996 – since the end of the 1970s, especially as Internacional were Club World Cup winners in 2006 and Gremio are the reigning Libertadores champions.

Back from their first-ever season out of the top flight, **Internacional** under Odair Hellmann will probably be content with a slot in the Libertadores. **Gremio**, however, shape up like serious challengers. They have retained coach Renato Portaluppi, as well as key figures such as Luan and the Barcelona-bound Arthur. With an attractive passing style they might take some stopping.

Former Gremio and national team boss Mano Menezes has an interesting squad at **Cruzeiro**, who may be contenders. Rivals **Atletico Mineiro** would seem to be going through a transitional campaign, while traditional but humble **America** are back as Serie B champions, with coach Enderson Moreira, who has now been in charge for almost two years, simply seeking survival.

Two interesting coaches are in charge of the Curitiba teams. Newly promoted **Parana** have Rogerio Micale, who led Brazil to Olympic gold in 2016 but may have a tough task keeping the team up. Much more is expected of 2001 champions **Atletico Paranaense**, now under Fernando Diniz, who has done fine work with smaller outfits. Diniz encourages his team to pass out from the back, which is a style that appears to have scared off many Brazilian clubs, and it will be fascinating to see how he gets on now that his opportunity in Serie A has belatedly arrived.

The other southern club, from the neighbouring state of Santa Catarina, are **Chapecoense**, who rebuilt in remarkable style after the air disaster to finish eighth last term. This year could be harder and avoiding relegation is the priority.

The same also applies to the quartet from the north east: the Salvador duo of **Vitoria** and **Bahia**, **Sport** of Recife and newly promoted **Ceara** from Fortaleza. The clubs from this region make frequent complaints about the distribution of TV money and it has been some time since a north-eastern side put in a genuine title challenge.

None managed a top-10 finish last season and all may well spend much of their time fretting about staying up. WS

Battle...Tche Tche of Palmeiras takes on Corinthians

Star...Gremio's Arthur (right) is set to join Barcelona

Gremio shape up like serious challengers, and with an attractive passing style they might take some stopping

BRAZILIAN SERIE A: 2018

1 America (Belo Horizonte)
Atletico Mineiro
Cruzeiro
2 Atletico Paranaense (Curitiba)
Parana
3 Bahia (Salvador)
Vitoria
4 Botafogo (Rio de Janeiro)
Flamengo
Fluminense
Vasco da Gama
5 Ceara (Fortaleza)
6 Chapecoense (Chapeco)
7 Corinthians (Sao Paulo)
Palmeiras
Sao Paulo
8 Gremio (Porto Alegre)
Internacional
9 Santos (Santos)
10 Sport (Recife)

MARCH 13-APRIL 10, 2018

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Tuesday March 13

CANADA: The government says it will "support in principle" a trilateral bid to host the 2026 World Cup with Mexico and the USA.
CHINA: Shanghai SIPG win 1-0 at Ulsan to become the second club through to the AFC Champions League knockout stage.
ITALY: Roma beat Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0 to draw 2-2 on aggregate and win on away goals in the Champions League last 16.
SCOTLAND: Aberdeen goalkeeper Freddie Woodman, on loan from Newcastle United, saves three penalties in a shoot-out victory over Kilmarnock in the Scottish Cup.
SPAIN: Second-half sub Wissam Ben Yedder scores twice as Sevilla win 2-1 at Manchester United to reach a European Cup quarter-final for the first time in 60 years.
USA: MLS sides Toronto and New York Red Bulls eliminate Mexican clubs Tigres and Tijuana to reach the last four of the CONCACAF Champions League.

Wednesday March 14

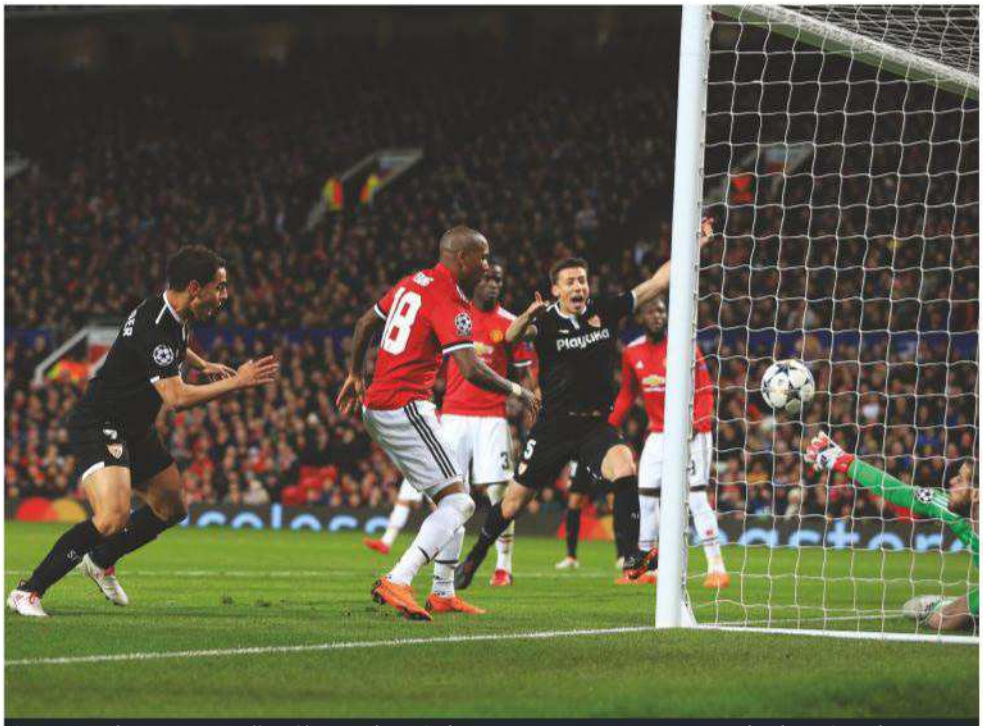
ARGENTINA: River Plate beat Boca Juniors 2-0 in the Super Cup with goals from Gonzalo Martinez and Ignacio Scocco.
BRAZIL: Real Madrid-bound Vinicius Junior gets up from the bench to score twice as Flamengo come from behind to beat Emelec 2-1 in the Libertadores Cup.
ENGLAND: Mark Hughes, who spent two seasons at Southampton as a player, agrees to manage the side until the end of the season.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes oversees a record 11th successive Champions League win with a 3-1 victory at Besiktas.
HONG KONG: Kitchee stun Kashiwa Reysol of Japan 1-0 to become the first team from Hong Kong ever to win a game in the AFC Champions League.
MEXICO: America and Guadalajara reach the CONCACAF Champions League semi-finals with aggregate victories over Tauro and Seattle Sounders respectively.
SPAIN: Lionel Messi's double in Barcelona's 3-0 victory over Chelsea takes him to 100 career goals in the Champions League.

Thursday March 15

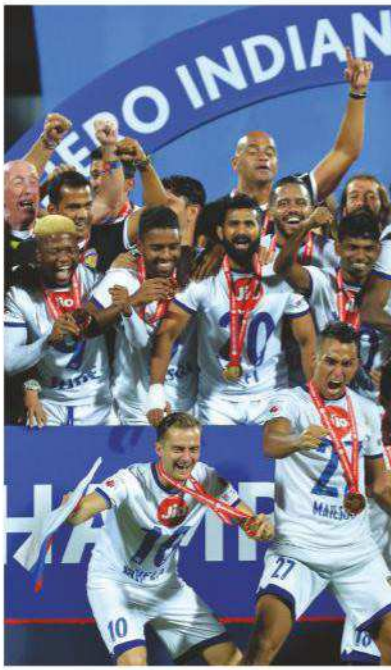
AUSTRIA: Red Bull Salzburg draw 0-0 with Borussia Dortmund to reach the Europa League quarter-finals and stretch their unbeaten run in Europe to 19 games.
RUSSIA: The World Cup hosts look set to be without Aleksandr Kokorin this summer after the Zenit striker ruptures cruciate ligaments in his right knee during a 1-1 draw with RB Leipzig in the Europa League.

Friday March 16

FIFA: A unanimous vote means VAR will be used at this summer's World Cup finals.



Super sub...Wissam Ben Yedder (far left) scores his and Sevilla's second goal away at Manchester United in the Champions League



Saturday March 17

BELGIUM: Standard Liege win the Belgian Cup for an eighth time, beating Genk 1-0 with a goal from Renaud Emond in extra-time.
INDIA: Chennaiyin beat Bengaluru 3-2 in the Super League Final.
ITALY: Mauro Icardi scores four goals away to his former club Sampdoria as Internazionale win 5-0. Serie A leaders Juventus are held to a goalless draw at SPAL.

Sunday March 18

ENGLAND: Knocked out of the FA Cup third round by Coventry City in his last game as Stoke City boss, Mark Hughes reaches the semi-finals in his first as Southampton manager with a 2-0 victory away at Wigan Athletic.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich are beaten for first time in 19 games in all competitions, losing 2-1 away to RB Leipzig.
ITALY: Fiorentina are to rename their training ground after Davide Astori following the club captain's sudden death.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scores his 50th career hat-trick with a four-goal haul in Real Madrid's 6-3 win against Girona. Real Sociedad put reserve-team boss Imanol Alguacil in charge of the first team after parting company with coach Eusebio Sacristan.

Monday March 19

CHINA: Bottom of the CSL with no points and no goals from their first

Champs... Chennaiyin

three games, Dalian Yifang replace Ma Lin with Bernd Schuster, who has not coached since leaving Malaga in 2014.

HOLLAND: After being trialled in the Dutch Cup, the Eredivisie will use VAR next season.

ITALY: Gaetano Micciche is elected president of Serie A.

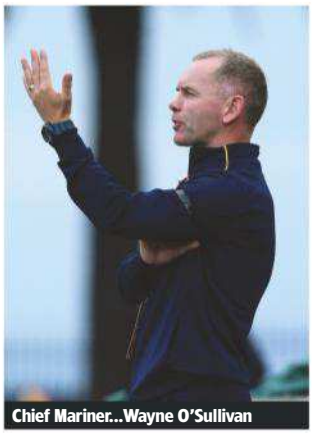
USA: Caretaker national coach Dave Sarachan, who took charge after Bruce Arena resigned in October, has his contract extended until the end of June.

Tuesday March 20

AUSTRALIA: Central Coast Mariners youth boss Wayne O'Sullivan is named the senior side's interim coach for the remainder of the season after Paul Okon quits.

Wednesday March 21

ENGLAND: Former Crystal Palace owner Simon Jordan is robbed of a £127,000 watch at gun point by ➤


Chief Mariner...Wayne O'Sullivan

CAF Champions League

MARK GLEESON

Preview

Challenge...George Lebese of Mamelodi Sundowns stops Wydad's Abdelatif Noussir (in white) in last year's quarter-finals

Past winners set to go head-to-head

Sundowns host holders Wydad in group opener

The last two winners of the African Champions League will go up against each other on the opening weekend of this season's group stage as holders Wydad take on 2016 victors Mamelodi Sundowns in one of several mouth-watering match-ups.

The South African club host Wydad in their Group C game in Pretoria on the weekend of May 4-6 in what will be a chance for revenge for Sundowns after the Moroccan side eliminated them at the quarter-final stage of last year's competition on penalties.

Winners a record eight times and runners-up last time out, Egypt's Al Ahly begin at home to perennial foe Esperance of Tunisia in Group A, while TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo will open their Group B campaign against ES Setif of Algeria. Setif won the Champions League in 2014 and Mazembe were 2015 winners.

Group B should be a tight affair with Mazembe up against two Algerian clubs – ES Setif and MC Alger – while the Moroccan newcomers Difaa El Jadidi are an unknown commodity.

Al Ahly and Esperance should have little trouble seeing off Township Rollers and KCCA in Group A. Those two sides, from Botswana and Uganda respectively, are among six newcomers to the continent's top club competition in a field of 16.

Wydad and Sundowns will be fancied to go through from Group C as they were drawn with newcomers AS Togo-Port and Horoya of Guinea.

In Group D, Tunisia's Etoile Sahel are the top seeds and they have been handed arguably the easiest draw as they take on three southern African clubs in ZESCO United of Zambia, Angola's Primeiro Agosto – who were last in the group phase 20 years ago – and newcomers Mbabane Swallows from Swaziland.

A second round of matches will be played midweek on May 15-16 before the competition breaks, resuming on July 17-18 – in another of those midweek dates that are now being increasingly employed by CAF for the annual club competitions.

The groups run until the end of August with the top two finishers advancing to the quarter-finals in September. The Final is over two legs on the weekends of November 2-4 and November 9-11.

This is the last time the Champions League will run inside a calendar year. The 2018-19 competition is scheduled to start in November, while in future years it will be played from August to May, in tandem with the similar competitions in Europe. WS

CAF CHAMPIONS LGE: GROUPS

GROUP A
Al Ahly (Egy)
Esperance (Tun)
KCCA (Uga)
Township Rollers (Bot)

GROUP B
MC Alger (Alg)
Difaa El Jadida (Mor)
TP Mazembe (DRC)
ES Setif (Alg)

GROUP C
Horoya (Gui)
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf)
AS Togo-Port (Tog)
Wydad (Mor)

GROUP D
Etoile Sahel (Tun)
Mbabane Swallows (Swa)
Primeiro Agosto (Ang)
ZESCO United (Zam)

Somalia

STEVE MENARY

Happier times ahead

Recovery under way in Mogadishu

The path to normality is long and painful for Somali football, but there are signs of progress. With a three-decade-long civil war now confined to the south of the country, CAF president Ahmad visited Mogadishu in April last year and suggested the city could host international football once again.

Further evidence came in September when Mogadishu's Banadir Stadium staged the country's first floodlit game in 30 years. Built in 1956, the stadium was ruined by the civil war, but FIFA funded a rebuilding programme which included floodlights, and they were switched on for a youth game between Waaberi and Hodan.

However, prospects of a first international on home soil since Uganda's visit in 1988 were set back in October when more than 300 people were killed by a truck bomb in Mogadishu.

"In 2018, we will start to play friendly matches," says a defiantly optimistic Somalia Football Federation president, Abdiqani Said Arab. "We want to bring a neighbouring country like Djibouti.

"It's easy to come to Mogadishu. We have requested the government cover the security issues. The stadium is good, the flights are good; really, we are very close."

He continues: "Most of Somalia loves football. It's in their blood. Some of the clubs have big fans. When the first league is playing, the stadium is full sometimes and there is no space to sit."

The 10-team first division is mainly confined to Mogadishu, although a second tier began in 2016, and some Somalis travel more than 100km to play. Wages attract players from Kenya, Rwanda and Cameroon, while matches are shown live on Facebook – which is popular with the hundreds of thousands of Somalis who have fled overseas.

> "People ask me all the time if I will go back. If Somalia called me and it was safe, I would be happy to play"
> Valerenga midfielder Abdisalam Ibrahim

Last game...Somalia (in blue) take on South Sudan

"I watch the games on YouTube with my brother," says Abdisalam Ibrahim, a former Manchester City trainee, who left Mogadishu for Norway aged six. He was on City's books from 2007 and mostly spent time out on loan before joining Greek side Olympiakos in 2014. Capped by Norway and now back there with Valerenga, he has not been involved in a competitive international and therefore remains eligible for Somalia.

"People ask me all the time if I will go back," he says. "If Somalia called me and it was safe, I would be happy to play. We could have a good team if the country was safe. Maybe football will make everyone come back."

One player who will definitely not be returning is Mukhtar Ali, who was born in Somalia but raised in London. A member of Chelsea's youth set-up, he played for England at under-16 and under-17 level

Training...Somalia's national team before the game against Niger

before joining Dutch side Vitesse last year and then switching his international allegiance to Saudi Arabia, making his senior debut against Jamaica in October.

As for recruiting other players from the diaspora, James Mangala, a Ugandan who has been Somalia's goalkeeping coach since 2014, says: "The federation want to recruit their players from overseas but sometimes they find problems.

"Some of them don't play first-team football and when time comes for national duty they lack match fitness. The league is improving but the standard is still low compared to other African leagues. You can't move forward when clubs and national teams participate only in CECAFA and CAF competitions."

The national team's last outing was a 4-1 defeat on aggregate to South Sudan in April 2017 in the first round of the African Nations Championship, with the home game being played in Djibouti. The last game before that was a 4-0 thrashing, in October 2015, by Niger, which ended any hope of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup.

Playing international football in Mogadishu would certainly help convince players such as Ibrahim that it is safe to return, but first the federation needs to reclaim the city's main stadium.

Since 1991, the 70,000-capacity arena has been occupied by a succession of peacekeepers, Al Shabaab militants, Somali and Ugandan troops, and, since 2011, by the African Union Mission.

On his 2017 visit, Ahmad met Somali prime minister Hassan Ali Kheyre, who promised to rebuild the stadium once the AUM troops have gone.

Estimates of when that can be achieved vary from later this year to 2020 – but a military withdrawal would really signal that Somalia was safe and help football really kick on. WS

➤ a motorcyclist who pulled up alongside his car at traffic lights.
FIFA: Poland are awarded the rights to host the 2019 Under-20 World Cup, while Peru will stage the 2019 Under-17 World Cup.
IRAQ: Qatar beat hosts Iraq 3-2 in the International Friendship Championship at the Basra International Stadium in the first game since FIFA lifted a three-decade-long ban on the country staging international competitions.
IVORY COAST: Having reversed his decision to retire from international football, Yaya Toure pulls out of Ivory Coast's squad for games against Togo and Moldova due to "family reasons".

Thursday March 22

FRANCE: UEFA orders Paris Saint-Germain to close part of their stadium for their next European game as punishment for fan disturbances during the Champions League tie with Real Madrid.
ITALY: Prosecutors open preliminary investigations into last year's sale of Milan by Silvio Berlusconi's holding company to a Chinese consortium for €740m.
KYRGYZSTAN: A 5-1 win over Myanmar confirms Kyrgyzstan first-ever qualification for the AFC Asian Cup finals.
WALES: Gareth Bale gets a hat-trick to become Wales' all-time top scorer, with 29 goals, as they beat China 6-0 in Ryan Giggs' first game as manager. Chris Gunter plays his 86th game to become his country's most-capped outfield player.

Friday March 23

COLOMBIA: Juan Fernando Quintero's late penalty sees Colombia come from 2-0 down to win 3-2 away to France.
SPAIN: Villarreal midfielder Rodri makes his international debut as Spain draw 1-1 with Germany.
WALES: Bala Town's 1-0 loss to Connah's Quay means The New Saints are champions for a seventh successive season.

Saturday March 24

CHILE: Marcos Bolados comes off the bench to get the winner on his debut as Chile beat Sweden 2-1.
CROATIA: Bruno Boban, a 25-year-old striker with third-tier NK Marsonia, dies after being struck on the chest by the ball during a game against Slavonija Pozega.

Sunday March 25

ARGENTINA: Sergio Aguero says he will leave Manchester City when ➤

➤ his contract in England ends in 2020 and return to Independiente.

Monday March 26

DR CONGO: Arthur Masuaku, Paul-Jose Mpoku, Jordan Ikoko and Gael Kakuta quit the national team's training camp in protest at poor organisation ahead of Tuesday's friendly against Tanzania.
HOLLAND: Justin Kluivert, the son of former Barcelona star Patrick, makes his international debut from the bench as Holland beat Portugal 3-0 to give Ronald Koeman his first win since becoming national coach in February.
URUGUAY: Edinson Cavani marks his 100th cap for Uruguay by scoring in a 1-0 victory over Wales.

Tuesday March 27

ASIAN CUP: North Korea, Yemen and the Philippines claim the final three places at January's Asian Cup finals in the United Arab Emirates.
BRAZIL: Gabriel Jesus scores the only goal to end Germany's 22-game unbeaten run as the two sides meet for the first time since Brazil lost 7-1 in the 2014 World Cup semi-finals.
KUWAIT: Kazma beat Al Shabab on penalties after a 3-3 draw to win the Federation Cup.
PANAMA: World Cup debutants Panama are hammered 6-0 in a friendly by Switzerland.
SCOTLAND: Matt Phillips gets his first international goal as Scotland beat Hungary 1-0 for the first victory of Alex McLeish's second spell in charge.
SPAIN: Isco scores the first hat-trick of his career as Spain beat Argentina 6-1 to equal their opponent's heaviest-ever defeat.
UEFA: From next season, clubs in the Champions League and Europa League will be able to register three new eligible players "without any restrictions", so January signings can play for their new team even if they have already appeared in a UEFA competition that season.
USA: Paris Saint-Germain teenager Timothy Weah makes his debut as the US beat Paraguay 1-0.

Wednesday March 28

CHINA: Fabio Capello leaves Jiangsu Suning after three games of the new season. Former Roma sporting director Walter Sabatini resigns as technical coordinator.

Thursday March 29

CONGO: French coach Sebastien Migne leaves his post by mutual consent, four days after his first ➤

Greece

NICK BIDWELL

PAOK owner in gun drama

Club are punished after Savvidis storms onto pitch

Long beset by hooliganism, Greek football now has a different sort of lawlessness to live down after gun-toting PAOK owner Ivan Savvidis stormed onto the pitch during a recent top-of-the-table encounter with AEK.

Savvidis, who could quite clearly be seen wearing a holstered gun, lost his cool after PAOK had a potential match-winning goal ruled out for offside on the stroke of full-time. Accompanied by a battalion of bodyguards, the enraged Greek-Russian businessman entered the field of play to say his piece, trying in vain to encourage his side's players to walk off. He then made an aggressive beeline for the referee, only to be held back by his minders.

According to the AEK version of events, Savvidis made threats to their operations manager, Vassilis Dimitriadis, and the match referee, Georgios Kominis. "It was lamentable to see a president come onto the pitch to lash out at the referee and then head to our bench to do the same," declared AEK's Spanish coach Manolo Jimenez. "I can't understand it. I thought I was hallucinating. It was like a Chuck Norris or a Clint Eastwood film."

With AEK players refusing to return to the field following the incident, the game was abandoned. Yet there was still time for another post-match twist, with the ref maintaining that the goal had been awarded after all and that the final score was 1-0 to PAOK.

Needless to say, this was anything but the end of the matter. The next day, the national government suspended top-flight football in the country – a shutdown that was to last three weeks – while Savvidis would have the book thrown at him by the Greek Superleague disciplinary committee. He was handed a three-year ban from all domestic sports facilities and fined €100,000.

> "I thought I was hallucinating. It was like a Chuck Norris or a Clint Eastwood film"
> AEK coach Manolo Jimenez

Showdown...Savvidis (centre) goes to confront the referee

Chaos...a policeman orders AEK's Vassilis Lambropoulos to leave the pitch

PAOK also were hit with a raft of other sanctions. Found guilty of abusing the referee, their technical director Lubos Michel received a 90-day stadium ban and was fined €15,000; the result of the AEK match was overturned – with the score registered as a 3-0 victory for the Athens club – and a double-whammy points deduction was applied to PAOK, with three in the current campaign and two next term. In addition, PAOK must pay a fine of €63,000 and play three home games this spring behind closed doors.

Once in contention for their first league crown in 33 years, PAOK now look out of the title race, trailing leaders AEK by five points after the league resumed.

While PAOK are not the only Greek club behaving badly, they have been skating on thin ice of late. Last autumn a number of their fans attacked members of Athens' Pakistani community and earlier this year then-Olympiakos coach Oscar Garcia was felled pre-match by an object thrown by a PAOK ultra, which sent Garcia to hospital and resulted in the game being scratched.

PAOK's punishment for the Garcia incident would be

a three-point penalty, although it would later be overturned on appeal.

Many in Greece were surprised to actually see Savvidis and PAOK brought to book. A man with multiple friends in high places, the former Russian MP is regarded in most quarters as untouchable. He is thought to be on good terms with leading Greek politicians – particularly prime minister Alexis Tsipras and minister of defence Panos Kammenos – and once claimed in a TV interview that the Greek football federation was "ours".

But what he did not expect was the determination of FIFA to clean the Hellenic house. Since setting up a monitoring committee last year to root out the violence and other misdemeanours in the Greek game, the world governing body has grown tired of the lack of remedial action. The Savvidis affair was the last straw. For FIFA, the time had come to go nuclear.

"The Monitoring Committee is of the opinion that the current situation in Greek football, with its repeated episodes of violence, does not allow the Greek federation to guarantee the smooth running of national competitions," wrote Monitoring Committee chair Hubert Hubel in a letter to the Greek federation and FIFA. "Against this background, we urge the FIFA Member Associations Committee to look at this situation without delay and to refer the case to the FIFA Council for consideration.

"The Monitoring Committee unanimously recommends the immediate suspension of the HFF (Greek federation) from FIFA membership."

Clearly, the message had the desired effect. Hence the slew of punishments meted out to PAOK and all 16 top-flight clubs agreeing to changes to the league's disciplinary code, including point deductions and automatic relegations for any club involved in violence three times in a single season.

This is a story, though, which is bound to run and run. PAOK have already filed their appeal and insist they have been the victims of what they call a "co-ordinated media storm". Certainly, Savvidis is not one to back down and he is sure to come out fighting.

"Despite the constant attacks I have to endure on all levels, I will continue to strive for a fair football, equitable refereeing in all matches and titles being won on the pitch and not in courtrooms," says Savvidis, whose business portfolio features tobacco companies, hotels, media outlets and the port of Salonika. "Unfortunately, my family and I have been taken hostage by a totally sick football establishment." WS

Assault...then-Olympiakos coach Oscar Garcia was hospitalised in February

➤ win in charge of the national team – a 2-0 victory over Guinea-Bissau.

ENGLAND: Mick McCarthy, the Championship's longest-serving manager, will leave Ipswich Town at the end of the season, having joined the club in 2012.

UAE: Nine-man Al Wahda beat Al Wasl 2-1 in the League Cup Final.

Friday March 30

AUSTRALIA: In beating Perth Glory 3-2, Sydney become the first team to win back-to-back A-League Premierships and claim a place in next year's AFC Champions League.

Saturday March 31

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain win the French League Cup for a fifth successive season, beating Monaco 3-0 in the Final.

GERMANY: Bayern Munich thrash Borussia Dortmund 6-0 in *Der Klassiker*, with Robert Lewandowski getting a hat-trick against his former side.

GREECE: After a government-ordered three-week suspension of the league, PAOK beat Atromitos 2-0 as games begin again.

RUSSIA: Fans remain silent during the first half of games in tribute to victims of a fire at a shopping and entertainment complex in which at least 64 people died on 25 March.

SPAIN: Sub Lionel Messi scores the equaliser as Barcelona come from 2-0 down with two minutes left to draw 2-2 with Sevilla and preserve their unbeaten La Liga record. The second-tier game at Huesca is postponed after Albacete's Pelayo Novo falls out of a third floor window of the team hotel before the game.

USA: Zlatan Ibrahimovic comes on as a substitute for the last 20 minutes and scores twice as LA Galaxy come from 3-0 down to beat new boys Los Angeles FC 4-3.

Sunday April 1

BELARUS: Looking to win a 13th consecutive league title, BATE begin the new season with a 1-0 victory at home to Smolevichi.

ENGLAND: Dele Alli scores twice as Tottenham Hostpur beat Chelsea 3-1 and win at Stamford Bridge for the first time in 28 years.

GREECE: AEK win 3-0 against 10-man Panathinaikos to go clear at the top of the table.

Monday April 2

ENGLAND: West Bromwich Albion put Darren Moore in charge after Alan Pardew parts company with the club after Saturday's 2-1 loss ➤

➤ at home to Burnley left them bottom of the league and 10 points from safety with six games left.
PORTUGAL: Iker Casillas makes his 1,000th professional appearance but the 36-year-old goalkeeper finishes on the losing side as Porto are beaten 2-0 by Belenenses.
SWEDEN: Defending champions Malmo start the new season with a 2-1 win at Elfsborg.

Tuesday April 3

MEXICO: Club America's 17-match unbeaten run in the CONCACAF Champions League ends with a 3-1 loss to Toronto in Canada in the first leg of their semi-final.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo is the first player to score in 10 successive Champions League games, getting two goals as Real Madrid win 3-0 at Juventus.

Wednesday April 4

ENGLAND: Former England midfielder Ray Wilkins dies at the age of 61. Liverpool score three times in the opening 31 minutes to beat Manchester City in the Champions League semi-finals.
GREECE: Assistant coach Christos Kontis will take charge of the last four games of the season after Olympiakos part company with Oscar Garcia.

Thursday April 5

HOLLAND: Ajax announce that their Amsterdam ArenA will be renamed the Johan Cruyff ArenA.
ITALY: Lazio beat Red Bull Salzburg 4-2 to end the Austrian side's 19-match unbeaten run in Europe and 36-game streak without losing in all competitions.

Saturday April 7

ENGLAND: Manchester City's title celebrations are put on hold as they surrender a two-goal lead and lose 3-2 at home to Manchester United.
FRANCE: Samba Diop, an 18-year-old defender with second-tier side Le Havre, is found dead at his parents' home.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich win 4-1 at Augsburg to wrap up their sixth consecutive Bundesliga title.
IRAN: Persepolis beat Padideh 1-0 to retain the Iran Pro League title with three games to spare.
SPAIN: Barcelona equal La Liga's all-time record of 38 consecutive games unbeaten as a Lionel Messi hat-trick gives them a 3-1 victory over Leganes.
TUNISIA: Youssef Msakni looks set

Switzerland

BRIAN HOMEWOOD

Hoodoo all set to end?

Young Boys poised to win first title in 24 years

The film was optimistically entitled *Meisterträume* (championship dreams), yet in true Young Boys style it ended up documenting yet another heroic failure. Throughout their 2009-10 campaign, they were followed by a fly-on-the-wall film crew and, for much of that season, it looked like they would be recording the team's first Swiss championship since 1986.

Instead, it become the story of how a side led by current national coach Vladimir Petkovic and with an attack spearheaded by Seydou Doumbia somehow blew a 13-point lead.

After seeing that advantage frittered away over the course of several months, panic set in and a 5-1 defeat by Lucerne in their penultimate game meant they had to beat Basle at home to win the league. They lost 2-0 and were condemned to a third successive runners-up spot. For their opponents, it was the start of a run of eight successive Swiss Super League titles.

Like Bayer Leverkusen in Germany and Botafogo in Brazil, Young Boys are a team who have an uncanny knack of faltering at the crucial moment and snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. In all, they have finished runners-up seven times since their last Swiss league title and lost three Swiss Cup Finals – all of them to Sion – since they last lifted that trophy in 1987.

They have never qualified for the Champions League group stage, although there was another heroic failure in 2010-11 when they raced into a 3-0 lead at home to

to miss the World Cup after being ruled out for six months with a knee injury.

Sunday April 8

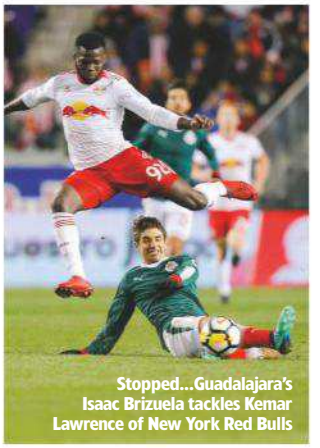
AUSTRALIA: Sydney's Brazilian striker Bobo sets an A-League record – for goals in a single campaign, including the finals – in a 3-0 victory over Adelaide United.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scores in a 10th successive game for Real Madrid as they draw 1-1 at home to Atletico Madrid.
TUNISIA: Esperance claim the Tunisia Premier League title with three games to spare, beating mid-table Metlaoui 1-0.

Monday April 9

GREECE: Players at Panathinaikos go on strike over unpaid wages from last year. The club say they will receive the money they are owed on Thursday and return to training, with Sunday's league game against Atromitos going ahead as planned.
JAPAN: Seventy days before they play their opening game at this summer's World Cup finals, Japan replace coach Vahid Halilhodzic with Akira Nishino.
OCEANIA: The Oceania Football Confederation is to investigate "potential wrongdoings" after a FIFA audit into construction of its new headquarters in Auckland. OFC president David Chung resigned on Friday.

Tuesday April 10

ITALY: Having lost 4-1 in Spain, Roma beat Barcelona 3-0 at home to win on away goals and reach the Champions League semi-finals.
MEXICO: A goalless draw away to New York Red Bulls gives Guadalajara a 1-0 aggregate victory and puts them in the CONCACAF Champions League Final, where they will meet Toronto. WS


Stopped...Guadalajara's Isaac Brizuela tackles Kemar Lawrence of New York Red Bulls

Tussle...Young Boys' Kevin Mbabu (left) gets to grips with Luca Zuffi of Basle in April's 2-2 draw

Tottenham Hotspur in the first leg of the play-offs, only to be pulled back to 3-2 and then thrashed 4-0 at White Hart Lane.

This year, however, it seems that not even Young Boys can blow it.

They came out of the Easter weekend with a 16-point advantage over Basle after a 2-2 draw with the champions and have what appears to be a fairly straightforward run-in.

Expectations are so high there is even a website called Meistertraum that consists of a clock counting down the amount of time to the earliest moment that Young Boys could win the title.

Much of the club's recent transformation is down to sporting director Christoph Spycher, a former Swiss international who has filled his current role since September 2016, taking over when the team were in disarray following a 9-2 aggregate loss to Borussia Monchengladbach in a Champions League qualifier and a stuttering start to their domestic campaign.

Spycher was initially dismissed as too inexperienced by the media, with predictions that he would suffer a similar fate to that of Alexander Frei, who had a miserable time as sporting director of Lucerne.

But Spycher proved himself to be an astute director, off-loading several senior players and assembling a young squad with a strong African influence.

Those players include Ghanaian defender Kasim Nuhu from Mallorca, Ivorian duo Sekou Sanogo from Thun and Roger Assale from TP Mazembe, and Cameroonian midfielder Nicolas Ngamaleu from Austrian club Altach.

Transformation... Christoph Spycher

Spycher, however, denies there was a deliberate policy to favour Africans, explaining: "It's simply that these players fit our profile in terms of quality and mentality.

"We are a training club and we want to raise young players."

There are also several Swiss players with African heritage, including Kevin Mbabu from Newcastle United, Jordan Lotomba from Lausanne-Sport, Djibril Sow from Borussia Monchengladbach and Jean-Pierre Nsame from Servette.

"Football has become faster and more physical," says Spycher. "These players have to fulfil the necessary prerequisites but they are also interesting because they have been well trained in Switzerland in the tactical and technical area."

Spycher is ably helped by chief scout Stephane Chapuisat, the former Switzerland and Borussia Dortmund striker who has a network of contacts in French-speaking Switzerland.

The side also benefits from the experience of former Palermo and Switzerland defender Steve Von Bergen and French striker Guillaume Horau, who turned down a move to Lyon last year because he believed that staying in Berne would give him more time to concentrate on his career as a singer.

Meanwhile, coach Adi Hutter, in his third season at the club, has brought in the same high-intensity, high-pressing game that he employed when leading Red Bull Salzburg to the Austrian league title in 2015.

Young Boys have made no bones about their business model of buying young players to sell on for a handy profit after a couple of seasons.

During the transfer window last summer they raked in €22.4million from the sale of players – notably midfielder Denis Zakaria (Gladbach), goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo (RB Leipzig) and winger Yoric Ravet (Freiburg) – and spent only €5.4m on new signings.

"There won't exactly be a sell-off, but there will be changes in the summer," reveals Spycher. "It's the reality that we cannot keep this team together for two years.

"We are in a training league so it is natural that the best players will leave at some point. That is part of our business model. When the best leaves, we want to generate income so we can re-invest." WS

On song...Guillaume Hoarau

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

HOW IT WORKS Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Marc-Andre TER STEGEN (Barcelona)	26
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	23
ALISSON (Roma)	10
EDERSON (Manchester City)	9
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	8
Iker CASILLAS (Porto)	2
Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	2
Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan)	2
Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale)	2
Alphonse AREOLA (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
NETO (Valencia)	1
Rui PATRICIO (Sporting)	1
Wojicech SZCZESNY (Juventus)	1
Sven ULREICH (Bayern Munich)	1

DEFENDERS

Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	24
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City)	24
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	20
Kyle WALKER (Manchester City)	20
Kalidou KOULIBALY (Napoli)	17
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	14
Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich)	14
Samuel UMTITI (Barcelona)	12
Mats HUMMELS (Bayern Munich)	11
Milan SKRINIAR (Internazionale)	10
Dani ALVES (Paris Saint-Germain)	9
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	9
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	8
Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	7
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	7
John STONES (Manchester City)	7
Faouzi GHOULAM (Napoli)	6
ALEX SANDRO (Juventus)	5
Davide CALABRIA (Milan)	5
Thomas MEUNIER (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Nelson SEMEDO (Barcelona)	5
Antonio VALENCIA (Manchester United)	5
Mehdi BENATIA (Juventus)	4
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	4
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	4
Layvin KURZAWA (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona)	4
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	4
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	3
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	3
Andreas CHRISTENSEN (Chelsea)	3
Jose GAYA (Valencia)	3
NALDO (Schalke)	3
Andrew ROBERTSON (Liverpool)	3
Alex TELLES (Porto)	3
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	2
Marc BARTRA (Borussia Dortmund/Real Betis)	2
Jose GIMENEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Andreas GRANQVIST (Krasnodar)	2
MARCELO (Lyon)	2
Philipp MAX (Augsburg)	2
Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Virgil VAN DIJK (Liverpool)	2
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	2
Manuel AKANJI (Basle/Borussia Dortmund)	1
Raul ALBIOL (Napoli)	1
Santiago ARIAS (PSV)	1
Antonin BARAK (Udinese)	1
Duje CALETA-CAR (Red Bull Salzburg)	1
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	1
Joao CANCELO (Internazionale)	1
Ben DAVIES (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Matthijs DE LIGT (Ajax)	1
Stefan DE VRIJ (Lazio)	1
FILIPE LUIS (Atletico Madrid)	1
Alessandro FLORENZI (Roma)	1
JARDEL (Benfica)	1
Phil JONES (Manchester United)	1
Sead KOLASINAC (Arsenal)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Roma)	1
Andrea MASIELLO (Atalanta)	1
Jeremy MATHIEU (Sporting)	1
Gabriel MERCADO (Sevilla)	1
Nacho MONREAL (Arsenal)	1
Lukasz PISZCZEK (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Alessio ROMAGNOLI (Milan)	1
Antonio RUDIGER (Chelsea)	1
Salif SANE (Hanover)	1
Djibril SIDIBE (Monaco)	1
Nevan SUBOTIC (Saint-Etienne)	1
Jonathan TAH (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Thomas VERMAELEN (Barcelona)	1

MIDFIELDERS

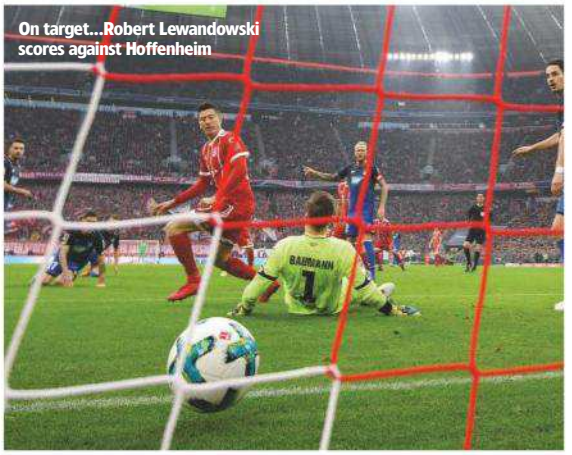
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	61
David SILVA (Manchester City)	14
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	11
Leroy SANE (Manchester City)	10
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	9
Leon BAILEY (Bayer Leverkusen)	8
ISCO (Real Madrid)	6
CASEMIRO (Real Madrid)	5
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool/Barcelona)	5
Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Goncalo GUEDES (Valencia)	5
Marek HAMSIK (Napoli)	5
Andres INIESTA (Barcelona)	5
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	4
N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	4
Nemanja MATIC (Manchester United)	4
James RODRIGUEZ (Bayern Munich)	4
WILLIAN (Chelsea)	4
ALLAN (Napoli)	3
JORGINHO (Napoli)	3
Geoffrey KONDOGBIA (Valencia)	3
Mesut OZIL (Arsenal)	3
Adrien RABIOT (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Nuri SAHIN (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Florian THAUVIN (Marseille)	3
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
CENGIZ Under (Roma)	2
Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Manchester City)	2
Sergej MILINKOVIC-SAVIC (Lazio)	2
Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid)	2
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	2
Dani PAREJO (Valencia)	2
PAULINHO (Barcelona)	2
Paul POGBA (Manchester United)	2
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	2
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	2
SON Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Corentin TOLISSO (Bayern Munich)	2
Lucas VAZQUEZ (Real Madrid)	2
Dele ALLI (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Emre CAN (Liverpool)	1
DANILO (Porto)	1
Mousa DEMBELE (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Marouane FELLAINI (Manchester United)	1
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	1
Alejandro GOMEZ (Atalanta)	1
Ibai GOMEZ (Alaves)	1
Luiz GUSTAVO (Marseille)	1
Naby KEITA (RB Leipzig)	1
Sami KHEDIRA (Juventus)	1
Yunus MALLI (Wolfsburg)	1
Blaise MATUIDI (Juventus)	1
Dimitri PAYET (Marseille)	1
Andreas PEREIRA (Valencia)	1
Ivan PERISIC (Internazionale)	1
Maximilian PHILIPP (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Miroslav PJANIC (Juventus)	1
Alassane PLEA (Nice)	1
PORTU (Girona)	1
Christian PULISIC (Borussia Dortmund)	1
SAUL Niguez (Atletico Madrid)	1
Bernardo SILVA (Manchester City)	1
TALISCA (Besiktas)	1
THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	1
Arturo VIDAL (Bayern Munich)	1
Ruud VORMER (Club Brugge)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	50
Mohamed SALAH (Liverpool)	38
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	25
NEYMAR (Paris Saint-Germain)	25
Edinson CAVANI (Paris Saint-Germain)	18
Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	17
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	14
Paulo DYBALA (Juventus)	12
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	9
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	9
Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio)	9
Romelu LUKAKU (Manchester United)	9
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	7
Lorenzo INSIGNE (Napoli)	6
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	6
Dries MERTENS (Napoli)	6
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	6
Timo WERNER (RB Leipzig)	4
Nabil FEKIR (Lyon)	3
JONAS (Benfica)	3
Kylian MBAPPE (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Radamel FALCAO (Monaco)	2
Roberto FIRMINO (Liverpool)	2
Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (Borussia Dortmund/Arsenal)	1
Cedric BAKUMBU (Villarreal)	1
Wissam BEN YEDDER (Sevilla)	1
Memphis DEPAY (Lyon)	1
Bas DOST (Sportling)	1
Gabriel JESUS (Manchester City)	1
Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Juventus)	1
Sadio MANE (Liverpool)	1

On fire...Ciro Immobile

Top...Mohamed Salah


On target...Robert Lewandowski scores against Hoffenheim

Pos	Name	Goals	Factor	Points
1	**Mohamed Salah** *(Liverpool)*	29	2	58
2	**Ciro Immobile** *(Lazio)*	26	2	52
3	**Robert Lewandowski** *(Bayern Munich)*	26	2	52
4	**Lionel Messi** *(Barcelona)*	26	2	52
5	**Jonas** *(Benfica)*	33	1.5	49.5

Joy...Jonas

Pos	Name	Goals	Factor	Pts
6	**EDINSON CAVANI** *(Paris Saint-Germain)*	24	2	48
	MAURO ICARDI *(Internazionale)*	24	2	48
	HARRY KANE *(Tottenham Hotspur)*	24	2	48
9	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *(Real Madrid)*	22	2	44
	LUIS SUAREZ *(Barcelona)*	22	2	44
11	**SERGIO AGUERO** *(Manchester City)*	21	2	42
12	**BAFETIMBI GOMIS** *(Galatasaray)*	26	1.5	39
13	**NEYMAR** *(Paris Saint-Germain)*	19	2	38
14	**P-E AUBAMEYANG** *(Borussia D/Arsenal)*	18	2	36
	PAULO DYBALA *(Juventus)*	18	2	36
	FABIO QUAGLIARELLA *(Sampdoria)*	18	2	36
17	**BAS DOST** *(Sporting)*	23	1.5	34.5
18	**RADAMEL FALCAO** *(Monaco)*	17	2	34
	ANTOINE GRIEZMANN *(Atletico Madrid)*	17	2	34
	DRIES MERTENS *(Napoli)*	17	2	34
	CHRISTIAN STUANI *(Girona)*	17	2	34
22	**IAGO ASPAS** *(Celta Vigo)*	16	2	32
	MARIANO DIAZ *(Lyon)*	16	2	32
	NABIL FEKIR *(Lyon)*	16	2	32
	RAHEEM STERLING *(Manchester City)*	16	2	32
	FLORIAN THAUVIN *(Marseille)*	16	2	32
	KARL TOKO EKAMBI *(Angers)*	16	2	32

Prolific... Bafetimbi Gomis

Pos	Name	Goals	Factor	Pts
28	**CARLITOS** *(Wisla Krakow)*	21	1.5	31.5
	FACUNDO FERREYRA *(Shakhtar Don)*	20	1.5	30
	GONZALO HIGUAIN *(Juventus)*	15	2	30
	ROMELU LUKAKU *(Manchester United)*	15	2	30
	JAMIE VARDY *(Leicester City)*	15	2	30
	BURAK YILMAZ *(Trabzonspor)*	20	1.5	30
35	**MOUSSA MAREGA** *(Porto)*	19	1.5	28.5
36	**MARIO BALOTELLI** *(Nice)*	14	2	28
	EDIN DZEKO *(Roma)*	14	2	28
	ROBERTO FIRMINO *(Liverpool)*	14	2	28
	RODRIGO *(Valencia)*	14	2	28
40	**MIKHAIL GORDEICHUK** *(BATE Borisov)*	18	1.5	27
	ALBERT PROSA *(Infonet Tallinn)*	27	1	27
	RAUNO SAPPINEN *(Flora Tallinn)*	27	1	27
	DIA SEBA *(Maccabi Netanya)*	18	1.5	27
44	**MAXI GOMEZ** *(Celta Vigo)*	13	2	26
	KYLIAN MBAPPE *(Paris Saint-Germain)*	13	2	26
	NILS PETERSEN *(Freiburg)*	13	2	26
	WILLIAN JOSE *(Real Sociedad)*	13	2	26
48	**MUNAS DABBUR** *(Red Bull Salzburg)*	17	1.5	25.5
	EMILIANO MARCONDES *(Nordsjaelland)*	17	1.5	25.5
50	**IRAKLI SIKHARULIDZE** *(Loco Tblisi)*	25	1	25

Rankings as of 02.04.18

Internationals

2019 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

3rd round

Group A

Mar 22 - Incheon, South Korea
Kyrgyzstan 5 (Shamshiev 2, Zemlianukhin 5, 63, Lux 74, Sagynbaev 87)
Myanmar 1 (Kyaw Ko Ko 83)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,068. **Ref:** Singh (Sin)

Mar 27 - Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 2 (Zemlianukhin 2, Murzaev 72)
India 1 (Lalpekhlua 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,588. **Ref:** Al Jeneibi (UAE)

Mar 27 - Yangon
Myanmar 1 (Kyi Lin 74)
Macau 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,638. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
India (QF)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
Kyrg'stan (QF)	6	4	1	1	14	8	13
Myanmar	6	2	2	2	10	10	8
Macau	6	0	0	6	4	16	0

Group B

Mar 27 - Beirut
Lebanon 2 (Maatouk pen 20, El Helwe 90+4)
Malaysia 1 (Syafiq 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

Mar 27 - Pyongyang
North Korea 2 (Jong Il-gwan 18, Pak Kwang-ryong 24)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Al Ali (UAE)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lebanon (QF)	6	5	1	0	14	4	16
Nth Korea (QF)	6	3	2	1	13	10	11
Hong Kong	6	1	2	3	4	7	5
Malaysia	6	0	1	5	5	15	1

Group C

Mar 27 - Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Afghanistan 2 (Sharza 27, 45)
Cambodia 1 (Laboravy 70)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 3,011. **Ref:** Iida (Jap)

Mar 27 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Abu Amarah 71)
Vietnam 1 (Nguyen Anh Duc 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,562. **Ref:** Perera (Sri)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan (QF)	6	3	3	0	16	5	12
Vietnam (QF)	6	2	4	0	9	3	10
Afghanistan	6	1	3	2	7	10	6
Cambodia	6	1	0	5	3	17	3

Group D

Mar 27 - Male
Maldives 7 (H Mohamed 35, N Hassan 66, 77, 80, 82, Waheed 69, Sifaau 90+3)
Bhutan 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Akrami (Irn)

Mar 27 - Muscat
Oman 1 (Al Hajri 88)
Palestine 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,700. **Ref:** Al Khudhayr (Sau)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oman (QF)	6	5	0	1	28	5	15
Palestine (QF)	6	5	0	1	25	3	15
Maldives	6	2	0	4	11	19	6
Bhutan	6	0	0	6	2	39	0

Group E

Mar 27 - Riffa
Bahrain 4 (Yusuf 12, 24, Issa 64, Yaser 67)
Turkmenistan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Abdul Baki (Oma)

Mar 27 - Taipei
Taiwan 1 (Chen Po-liang 37)
Singapore 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,139. **Ref:** Banerjee (Ind)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bahrain (QF)	6	4	1	1	15	3	13
Turk'stan (QF)	6	3	1	2	9	10	10
Taiwan	6	3	0	3	7	12	9
Singapore	6	0	2	4	3	9	2

Group F

Mar 27 - Manila
Philippines 2 (Ingreso 74, P Younghusband pen 90)
Tajikistan 1 (Nazarov pen 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,671. **Ref:** Gillett (Aus)
Sent off: Villanueva (Philippines) 90+4; Fatkhuloev (Tajikistan) 90+4

Mar 27 - Doha, Qatar
Yemen 2 (Al Matari 24, pen 83)
Nepal 1 (N Shrestha 45+2)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 7,535. **Ref:** Asimov (Uzb)

ASIAN CUP QUALS – 3RD RND: GP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Phil'pines (QF)	6	3	3	0	13	8	12
Yemen (QF)	6	2	4	0	7	5	10
Tajikistan	6	2	1	3	10	9	7
Nepal	6	0	2	4	3	11	2

● *The top 2 in each group have qualified for the 24-team finals – 12 other countries had already qualified: Australia, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates (as hosts) & Uzbekistan*

4-NATIONS TOURNAMENT

Played in Ndola, Zambia

Semi-finals

Mar 21
South Africa 1 (Mothiba 51)
Angola 1 (Djalma 31)
HT: 0-1. *South Africa 6-5 on pens*

Zambia 2 (Shonga 64, Kambole 90+1)
Zimbabwe 2 (Shamujompa og 47, Chawapiwa 73)
HT: 0-0. *Zambia 5-4 on pens*

3rd-place match

Mar 24
Angola 2 (Djalma 44, Yano 90)
Zimbabwe 2 (Amidu 22, Chawapiwa 52)
HT: 1-1. *Angola 4-2 on pens*

Final

Mar 24
Zambia 0
South Africa 2 (Tau 15, Mothiba 89)
HT: 0-1
Zambia: Nsabata - S Sakala (Banda 83), Kabwe, Z Tembo, Shamujompa, Phiri, A Mulenga (Kampamba 77), Mwepu, Mwila (Kambole 33), Shonga, F Sakala (Mbewe 63).
South Africa: Khune - Hlatshwayo, Cardoso, Mphahlele, Maela, Mokoena, Ndlovu, Mokotjo, Dolly, Vilakazi, Tau (Mothiba 88).

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP C'SHIP

Played in Basra, Iraq

Mar 21
Iraq 2 (Yasin 31, H Ali 67)
Qatar 3 (Akram Afif 17, 45+2, I Mohammad 63)
HT: 1-2

Mar 24
Qatar 2 (Hatem 58, Akram Afif 72)
Syria 2 (Al Somah 49, Z Midani 73)
HT: 0-0

Mar 27
Iraq 1 (Mohanad Ali 57)
Syria 1 (Al Khatib 76)
HT: 0-0

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP C'SHIP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qatar (C)	2	1	1	0	5	4	4
Syria	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Iraq	2	0	1	1	3	4	1

CHINA CUP

Played in Nanning, China

Semi-finals

Mar 22
China 0
Wales 6 (Bale 3, 21, 63, Vokes 38, 58, Wilson 45+1)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 36,573. **Ref:** Bin Yaacob (Mly)
China: Yan Junling - Zheng Zheng, Feng Xiaoting (Deng Hanwen 71), Wu Lei, Hao Junmin, Huang Bowen (He Chao 46), Gao Lin (Yu Hanchao 46), Wei Shihao, Yu Dabao (Zhao Xuri 46), He Guan (Liu Yiming 46), Wang Shenchao (Li Xuepeng 46).
Wales: Hennessey - Chester (Lockyer 71), A Williams, Davies (Mepham 70), Gunter, King, Allen (Evans 63), John, Bale (Woodburn 63), Vokes (Bradshaw 63), Wilson (Watkins 71).

Mar 23
Uruguay 2 (Suarez pen 10, Cavani 37)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 22,537. **Ref:** Al Adba (Qat)
Uruguay: Muslera - Varela, Godin, Gimenez, Laxalt, Nandez (Sanchez 60), Bentancur (C Rodriguez 78), Vecino (Torreira 67), De Arrascaeta (Ramirez 60), Suarez (Gomez 78), Cavani (Stuani 78).
Czech Republic: Pavlenka - Gebre Selassie, Suchy, Novak, Kaderabek, Barak, Darida, Soucek (Travnik 75), Boril (Frydek 38), Schick, Krmencik (Kopic 60).

3rd-place match

Mar 26
China 1 (Fan Xiaodong 5)
Czech Republic 4 (Kalas 58, Schick 59, Krmencik 62, Kaderabek 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,013. **Ref:** Beath (Aus)
China: Yan Junling - Deng Hanwen, Liu Yiming, He Guan, Zheng Zheng (Jiang Zhipeng 46), He Chao (Cai Huikang 46), Zhao Xuri, Yu Dabao (Wu Lei 64), Fan Xiaodong (Peng Xinli 73), Tan Long (Wang Shenchao 55), Xiao Zhi (Wei Shihao 64).
Czech Republic: Vaclik (Koubek 46) - Gebre Selassie (Kaderabek 46), Kalas, Suchy, Novak, Travnik (Soucek 79), Darida, Masopust (Schick 46), Barak, Kopic, Tecl (Krmencik 46).

Final

Mar 26
Wales 0
Uruguay 1 (Cavani 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,056. **Ref:** Falahi (Qat)
Wales: Hennessey - John (Roberts 59), Chester (Lockyer 74), A Williams, Davies (Hedges 89), Gunter (Matthews 78), Allen, King, Bale, Wilson (Evans 71), Vokes (Bodin 66).
Uruguay: Muslera - Varela, Godin, Gimenez (Coates 7), Laxalt, Nandez (Stuani 84), Bentancur (Silva 77), Vecino, C Rodriguez (Torreira 69), Suarez, Cavani (Gomez 90+2).

KING'S CUP

Played in Bangkok, Thailand

Semi-finals

Mar 22
Slovakia 2 (Rusnak 42, Duris 45+1)
United Arab Emirates 1 (Khalil 73)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,630. **Ref:** Gopala Krishnan (Sin)

Mar 22
Thailand 0
Gabon 0
Att: 25,781. **Ref:** Shukri (Mly)
Thailand 4-2 on pens

3rd-place match

Mar 25
United Arab Emirates 0
Gabon 1 (Madinda 14)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,670. **Ref:** Gopala Krishnan (Sin)

Final

Mar 25
Slovakia 3 (Duda 10, Mak 34, Pacinda 68)
Thailand 2 (Jakkaphan 42, Pansa 79)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 45,425. **Ref:** Shukri (Mly)
Slovakia: Sulla - Sekulic, Satka, Skrtel (Skriniar 73), Mazan, Gregus, Pacinda, Sabo (Lobotka 61), Duda, Mak (Rusnak 81), Nemec.
Thailand: Kawin - Chalermpong, Pansa, Roller, Peerapat (Siroch 76), Jakkaphan (Nurul 64), Thitipan, Mongkol (Bordin 46), Theerathon, Chanathip, Teerasil.

FRIENDLIES

Saturday, March 17

Mar17 - Tehran
Iran 4 (Khanzadeh 14, Gholizadeh 16, 46, K Rezaei 35)
Sierra Leone 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 3,000
Iran: Lak (H Hosseini 46) - Rezaeian (Ghafouri 60), Cheshmi (Montazeri 60), Noorafkan, Khanzadeh, A Karimi (M Ansari 55), Aghaei, Ebrahimi (Kamyabinia 46), Gholizadeh, Abdollahzadeh, K Rezaei (Alipour 46).
Sierra Leone: Tarawalie - Kargbo, Abdulrahman Bangura (M Kanu 77), Fofanah, Suma, Dunia, A Kanu, A Sesay (Abdul Dul Bangura 54), Mansaray, M Bangura (Alusine Koroma 54), T Koroma (Alhassan Koroma 36).

Tuesday, March 20

Mar 20 - Papeete
Tahiti 0
New Caledonia 0
Att: 500. **Ref:** Kawana-Waugh (NZ)
Tahiti: Torohia - Tchen (Tiaiho 60), Amau, Vernaudon, Li Fung Kuee (Tze-Yu 79), Tavanae (Graglia 46), Paama, T Tehau (Vahirua 62), Tihoni (Tau 70), Tetauira (Bourebare 55), A Tehau.
New Caledonia: Ulile - G Bearune (Wamytan 73), Tchacko (Wadriako 46), Sansot (Gony 68), Wakanumune, E Bearune, Decoire, Sele (Wamowe 90+1), Houala (Outiou 76), Athale, Dahite (Wahnawe 81).

Wednesday, March 21

Mar 21 - La Linea de la Concepcion, Spain
Andorra 1 (Rebes 6)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Saggi (Nor)
Andorra: Pol - Jesus Rubio, Llovera, Vales, Pomares (M San Nicolas 73), C Martinez (Gomez 89), M Vieira, Rebes, Clemente (Jordi Rubio 71), Rodriguez (E Garcia 87), Fernandez (L San Nicolas 58).
Liechtenstein: Jehle (B Buchel 46) - Malin (Yildiz 82), Polverino, Gubser, Goppel, Quintans, N Hasler, Wieser (Erne 82), A Sele, Salanovic, Burgmeier (S Wolfinger 46).

Mar 21
Antigua & Barbuda 3 (Browne 13, Parker 58, Weston 60)
Bermuda 2 (Lewis 25, Lambe 70)
HT: 1-1

Mar 21 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Bani Yaseen 28)
Kuwait 0
HT: 1-0

Mar 21 - Vientiane
Laos 0
Cambodia 1 (Prak Mony Udom 86)
HT: 0-0

Mar 21 - Saint-Leu-la-Foret, France
Togo 0
Madagascar 0

Thursday, March 22

Mar 22 - Algiers
Algeria 4 (Bounedjah 12, 80, Kapombe og 44, Medjani 54)
Tanzania 1 (Kichuya 20)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** El Ghandour (Egy)
Algeria: Chaouchi - Bensebaini (Chafai 68), Medjani, Mandi, Soudani (Benmoussa 78), Boukhanchouche (El Melali 88), Bentaleb (Bennacer 60), Ferhat, Mahrez, Bounedjah, Hanni (Abid 83).

Mar 22 - Riffa
Bahrain 0
Palestine 0

Mar 22 - Belmopan
Belize 4 (Salazar 8, Davis 22, E Smith 38, pen 74)
Grenada 2 (R Modeste 5, Mitchell 53)
HT: 3-1

Mar 22 - Brondby
Denmark 1 (Sisto 69)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,160. **Ref:** Doyle (RoI)
Denmark: Schmeichel - Dalsgaard, Kjaer (Boilesen 64), M Jorgensen, Larsen (Durmisi 67), Kvist (Lerager 64), Delaney, Eriksen (Schone 64), Y Poulsen, N Jorgensen, Sisto (Bendtner 72).
Panama: Penedo - Machado, Baloy, Escobar, Murillo, Pimentel (G Gomez 64), Godoy, Davis, Barcenas (Arroyo 77), B Perez, Quintero (Cooper 64). *Sent off: B Perez 66.*

Mar 22 - Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic 4 (Diaz 3, Espinal 5, Vasquez 25, 83)
Turks & Caicos Islands 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 300

Mar 22 - San Pedro de Alcantara, Spain
Faroe Islands 1 (Gregersen 27)
Latvia 1 (Fjodorovs 70)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 152. **Ref:** Nilsen (Nor)
Faroe Islands: Gestsson (Askham 46) - Naes, Gregersen, Nattestad, Baldvinsson, Sorensen (K Olsen 83), Joensen, Hansson, S Vatnhamar (Bartalsstovu 72), B Olsen (G Vatnhamar 88), Edmundsson.
Latvia: Vanins - Jurkovskis, Freimanis, Hmizs (Laizans 52), Torres (Uldrikis 57), Sabala (Fjodorovs 66), Indrans (Kluskins 46), Kazacoks, Tarasovs, Jagodinskis, Dubra.

Mar 22 - Limeil-Brevannes, France
Guinea-Bissau 0
Burkina Faso 2 (Bayala 37, Bance 40)
HT: 0-2

Mar 22 - Macau
Macau 0
Mauritius 1 (Bru 19)
HT: 0-1

Mar 22 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 2 (Daginaa og 31, Akhyar 64)
Mongolia 2 (Purevdorj 42, Serodyanjiv 70)
HT: 1-1

Mar 22 - Valletta
Malta 0
Luxembourg 1 (Da Mota 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,217. **Ref:** Jorgji (Alb)
Malta: Hogg - S Borg, Agius, S Pisani, P Fenech (Beerman 85), Schembri (J P Farrugia 72), R Muscat (J Zerafa 64), Z Muscat (R Camilleri 90), J Borg, Gambin (M Mifsud 76), Attard.
Luxembourg: Schon - Mahmutovic (Malget 46), Philipps, Gerson, C Martins (Skenderovic 88), V Thill, Rodrigues (Da Mota 65), Carlson (Janisch 76), Barreiro (Sinani 76), Jans, Turpel (Deville 65).

Mar 22 - Managua
Nicaragua 3 (Chavarria 35, Moreno 40, Barrera 71)
Cuba 1 (Santa Cruz 13)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,500

Mar 22 - Manila
Philippines 3 (P Younghusband pen 29, Minegishi 53, Ingreso 61)
Fiji 2 (Votoniu 74, R Krishna pen 81)
HT: 1-0

Friday, March 23

Mar 23 - Klagenfurt
Austria 3 (Alaba 15, Arnautovic 36, 51)
Slovenia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 18,100. **Ref:** Klossner (Swi)
Austria: Lindner - Lainer, Prodl, Hinteregger, Ilsanker, Baumgartlinger (Schlager 90), Schopf (Grillitsch 74), Alaba (Wober 90), Lazaro (Kainz 67), Burgstaller (Gregoritsch 69), Arnautovic (Schaub 86).
Slovenia: Belec - Skubic (Milec 62), Mevlja, Aljaz Struna, Jokic, Krhin, Kampl (Rotman 76), Kurtic (Birsa 46), Ilicic (Crnigoj 77), Verbic (Sporar 86), Beric (Bezjak 46).

Mar 23 - Baku
Azerbaijan 0
Belarus 1 (Medvedev og 42)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lat)
Azerbaijan: K Agayev - Pashayev (Akhundov 46), Medvedev, Alaskarov (Asif Mammadov 79), R Kurbanov, Abisov, Diniyev (Garayev 67), Yunanov (Nazarov 46), Richard Almeida, Rahimov (U Abbasov 73), Imamverdiyev (E Mammadov 67).
Belarus: Gutor - Dragun, Martynovich, Shitov, Politevich, Savitsky (Kovalev 75), Kislyak (Kendysh 69), Maevski, Volodko (Veretsilo 79), Laptev (Saroka 67), Stasevich (Nekhaychik 81).

Mar 23 - Razgrad
Bulgaria 0
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Kodro 20)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,200. **Ref:** Letexier (Fra)
Bulgaria: P Iliev - Bodurov, Chorbadzhiyski (S Popov 75), Bozhikov, Zanev (Nedelev 81), M Aleksandrov, G Milanov (Slavchev 63), I Popov, Kostadinov, Chochev (Despodov 63), Delev (Raynov 63). *Sent off: Raynov 87.*
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sehic - Memisevic, Bicakcic, Zukanovic (Sunjic 90+2), Kolasinac, Besic (Cimirot 84), Saric (Medunjanin 46), Pjanic, Kodro (Milosevic 46), Dzeko (Prevljak 76), Duljevic (Zakaric 69).

Mar 23 - Willemstad
Curacao 1 (Van Kessel 33)
Bolivia 1 (Lachman og 63)
HT: 1-0
Curacao: Room - R Martina, Statie, Carolina, Shermar Martina, Bacuna, Lachman, Nepomuceno (Winklaar 86), Antonia (Van Kessel 26), Benschop (Fernandez 66), E Hooi.
Bolivia: Lampe - Diego Bejarano, Candia, Pedraza (Ortiz 71), Sagredo, Castro, Wayar, Chumacero (Vaca 46), Campos (Alvarez 61), Arce, Miranda (J Garcia 78).

Mar 23 - Nicosia
Cyprus 0
Montenegro 0
Ref: Reinshreiber (Isr)
Cyprus: Pardo - Ioannou (Margaca 46), Merkis, J Demetriou, Froxylias (Antoniou 63), Christofi (Roushias 73), Sotiriou (Papafotis 85), Kousoulos (Economides 79), Georgiou (Katelaris 79), Artymatas, Laifis.
Montenegro: Mijatovic - Stojkovic (Marusic 65), N Vukcevic, Mijuskovic (Vesovic 78), Tomasevic, Jovetic (Bakic 65), Beciraj (Mugosa 36), Savic (Klimenta 46), Jovovic, Kojasevic (Haksabanovic 65), Ivanic.

Mar 23 - Paris
France 2 (Giroud 11, Lemar 26)
Colombia 3 (Muriel 28, Falcao 62, J Quintero pen 85)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Jaccottet (Swi)
France: Lloris - Sidibe, Varane, Umtiti, Digne (Hernandez 76), Mbappe (Dembele 66), Kante, Matuidi (Pogba 65), Lemar, Griezmann (Thauvin 84), Giroud (Ben Yedder 73).
Colombia: Ospina - Arias, D Sanchez, Mina, Fabra, Uribe (Barrios 90), C Sanchez, Aguilar (Lerma 67), Rodriguez (J Quintero 83), Falcao (D Zapata 68), Muriel (Izquierdo 77).

Mar 23 - Banjul
Gambia 1 (Ceesay pen 59)
Central African Republic 1 (Kethevoama 75)
HT: 0-0

Mar 23 - Dusseldorf
Germany 1 (Muller 35)
Spain 1 (Rodrigo 6)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 50,653. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Germany: Ter Stegen - Kimmich, Boateng, Hummels, Hector, Khedira (Gundogan 53), Kroos, Muller (Goretzka 81), Ozil, Draxler (Sane 68), Werner (Gomez 84).
Spain: De Gea - Carvajal, Pique (Nacho 51), Sergio Ramos, Jordi Alba, Thiago (Rodri 82), Koke, Iniesta (Saul 46), Silva (Lucas Vazquez 71), Isco (Marco Asensio 59), Rodrigo (Diego Costa 66).

Mar 23 - Athens
Greece 0
Switzerland 1 (Dzemaili 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,487. **Ref:** Hugo Miguel (Por)
Greece: Karnezis - Torosidis (Christodoulopoulos 63), Manolas (Stafylidis 78), Papastathopoulos, Retsos, Samaris (Kourbelis 72), Fortounis (Pelkas 74), Zeca, Bakasetas, Mitroglou (Koulouris 72), Donis (Bakakis 63).
Switzerland: Sommer - Lichtsteiner (Lang 61), Schar, Akanji, Rodriguez (Frei 79), Embolo (Oberlin 72), Freuler (Zuber 61), Behrami (G Fernandes 61), Xhaka, Dzemaili, Seferovic (Gavranovic 61).

Mar 23 - Les Abymes
Guadeloupe 0
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (J Jones 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Janvilliers (Mar)
Guadeloupe: Ajax - Felicianne (Gerbier 71), Hauterville, Moeson, Viator, Bolivar, Romain, Nangis, Morand (Linon 65), Mirval (Anatol 66), Passape (Vouteau 75). *Sent off: Bolivar 58.*
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - A Jones, Cyrus, M Williams, Hodge, Paul, Hyland, K George, J Jones (Joseph 46), L Garcia (Moore 79), N Lewis. *Sent off: Paul 58.*

Mar 23 - Amsterdam
Holland 0
England 1 (Lingard 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 51,500. **Ref:** Gil Manzano (Spa)
Holland: Zoet - De Ligt, De Vrij (Weghorst 89), Van Dijk, Hateboer, Wijnaldum, Strootman (Van de Beek 89), Van Aanholt, Promes (Propper 66), Dost (Babel 66), Depay.
England: Pickford - Walker, Stones, Gomez (Maguire 10; Dier 89), Trippier, Oxlade-Chamberlain, Henderson, Lingard (Alli 68), Rose (Young 71), Sterling (Welbeck 68), Rashford (Vardy 68).

Mar 23 - Budapest
Hungary 2 (Szalai 21, Nemeth 67)
Kazakhstan 3 (Murtazayev 6, Zainutdinov 10, Seidakhmet 39)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 6,500. **Ref:** Musjal (Pol)
Hungary: Gulacsi - Bese (Hangya 46), Fiola, Otigba, Botka (Lovrencsics 46), Ugrai (Nemeth 46), Kleinheisler (Patkai 72), Elek (Pinter 67), Dzsudzsak, Nikolic (Bode 76), Szalai.
Kazakhstan: Eric - Shomko, Maliy, Postnikov, Beisebekov, Kuat (Akhmetov 84), Zainutdinov (Paragulgov 73), Islamkhan (Miroshnichenko 90+3), Murtazayev (Suyumbayev 88), Seidakhmet (Pertsukh 60), Khizhnichenko (Tungyshbayev 76).

Mar 23 - Manchester, England
Italy 0
Argentina 2 (Banega 75, Lanzini 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Italy: Buffon - Florenzi (Zappacosta 60), Bonucci, Rugani, De Sciglio, Parolo (Pellegrini 60), Jorginho (Belotti 86), Verratti (Cristante 71), Chiesa (Candreva 60), Immobile (Cutrone 74), Insigne.
Argentina: Caballero - Bustos (Mercado 89), Otamendi, Fazio, Tagliafico, Lo Celso (Pavon 76), Biglia, Paredes (Banega 64), Lanzini, Higuain, Di Maria (Perotti 64).

Mar 23 - Belek, Turkey
Macedonia 0
Finland 0
Att: 100. **Ref:** Kalkavan (Tur)
Macedonia: Dimitrievski - Ristevski, D Velkoski, Musliu, Ristovski (Toshevski 90+4), Ademi, Spirovski (Zajkov 90+1), Bardhi (Nikolov 66), Alioski (Radeski 86), Pandev (Trickovski 88), Nestorovski (Trajkovski 79).
Finland: Hradecky - Pirinen, Arajuuri, Sauli Vaisanen, Toivio, Soiri (Yaghoubi 68), Sparv, Schuller, Lod, Pohjanpalo (Pelvas 48), Pukki.

Mar 23 - Liege, Belgium
Mali 1 (Diaby 44)
Japan 1 (Nakajima 90+3)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,424. **Ref:** Lambrechts (Blg)
Mali: D Diarra (Samassa 46) - Dibassy (C Traore 60), Wague (Dante 60), F Sacko, Fofana, Haidara, S Diarra, L Coulibaly, Adama Traore (Dicko 76), Diaby (Bissouma 84), Djenepo (H Sacko 60).
Japan: Nakamura - Ugajin (G Sakai 46), Shoji, Nagatomo, Makino, Morioka (Yu Kobayashi 65), Hasebe (Misao 60), Oshima (Yamaguchi 34), Usami (Nakajima 60), Kubo (Honda 70), Osako.

Mar 23 - Santa Clara, USA
Mexico 3 (Fabian 37, Layun 64, 90+2)
Iceland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 69,000. **Ref:** Villarreal (USA)
Mexico: J J Corona - Salcedo, Araujo, Moreno (Molina 58), J M Corona (Lozano 46), D Reyes, Guardado (Vela 58), Gallardo (Govea 69), Layun, Fabian (Pizarro 75), R Jimenez (Peralta 46).
Iceland: Runarsson - B Saevarsson (Fridjonsson 46), Arnason, Ingason, A Skulason, J Gudmundsson (E Bjarnason 80), A Gunnarsson (Eyjolfsson 46), Hallfredsson (R Gislason 68), B Bjarnason, A Gudmundsson (Kjartansson 46), B Sigurdarson (K Finnbogason 80).

Mar 23 - Oslo
Norway 4 (Kamara 36, 57, 90, Reginiussen 48)
Australia 1 (Irvine 19)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 5,871. **Ref:** Ekberg (Swe)
Norway: Jarstein - Elabdellaoui, Ajer, Reginiussen, Meling, M Elyounoussi (Fossum 87), Henriksen, Midtsjo (Odegaard 78), Johansen, Kamara, Johnsen.
Australia: Ryan - Wright (Susnjar 52), Milligan, Degenek, Behich, Mooy, Jedinak (Luongo 61), Leckie (Rukavytsya 85), Irvine (Rogic 61), Petratos (Kruse 74), Nabbout (Juric 66).

Mar 23 - Miami, USA
Peru 2 (Carrillo 12, Flores 48)
Croatia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,893. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)
Peru: Caceda - Trauco, Santamaria, Advincula, Ramos (Araujo 72), Tapia (Pena 84), Cueva (Benavente 64), Yotun, Flores (Hurtado 67), Carrillo (Aquino 77), Farfan (Ruidiaz 88). *Sent off: Yotun 75.*
Croatia: Subasic - Strinic, Corluka, Vida, Vrsaljko, Brozovic (Kovacic 56), Rakitic, Modric, Perisic (Rebic 77), Mandzukic (Pjaca 72), N Kalinic (Kramaric 64).

Mar 23 - Wroclaw
Poland 0
Nigeria 1 (Moses pen 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,208. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)
Poland: Fabianski (Bialkowski 46) - Piszczek (Jedrzejczyk 46), Glik, Kaminski, Frankowski (Kedziora 86), Linetty (Goralski 18), Krychowiak, Kurzawa, Zielinski, Kownacki (Milik 72), Lewandowski (Swierczok 67).
Nigeria: Uzoho - Shehu (Ebuehi 78), Troost-Ekong, Idowu, Balogun (Omeruo 74), Ndidi, Obi (Onazi 65), Iwobi (Musa 59), Moses, Iheanacho (Ogu 82), Ighalo (Simon 89).

Mar 23 - Zurich, Switzerland
Portugal 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 90+2, 90+6)
Egypt 1 (M Salah 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,869. **Ref:** Mazzoleni (Ita)
Portugal: Beto - Cedric, Rolando, Bruno Alves, Raphael Guerreiro, Ruben Neves (Goncalo Guedes 76), Bernardo Silva (Gelson Martins 68), Joao Moutinho (Andre Gomes 61), Joao Mario (Ricardo Quaresma 61), Cristiano Ronaldo, Andre Silva (Bruno Fernandes 76).
Egypt: El Shenawy - A Fathy, Gabr, Hegazy, Abdel-Shafy, Hamed (Ashour 87), Elneny, Said (Warda 67), Trezeguet, M Salah (Shikabala 79), Koka (Mohsen 62).

Mar 23 - Moscow
Russia 0
Brazil 3 (Miranda 53, Philippe Coutinho 62, Paulinho 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 80,840. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)
Russia: Akinfeev - Kudryashov, Granat, Kutepov, Samedov (Smolnikov 80), Zobnin (Erokhin 85), Glushakov (Anton Miranchuk 63), Aleksey Miranchuk (Dzagoev 55), Golovin, Kombarov (Zhirkov 76), Smolov (Zabolotniy 71).
Brazil: Alisson - Daniel Alves (Fagner 83), Miranda (Pedro Geromel 86), Thiago Silva, Marcelo, Casemiro, Paulinho (Renato Augusto 71), Willian (Taison 80), Philippe Coutinho (Fred 80), Gabriel Jesus (Roberto Firmino 65), Douglas Costa.

Mar 23 - Glasgow
Scotland 0
Costa Rica 1 (Urena 14)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,488. **Ref:** Stieler (Ger)
Scotland: A McGregor - Paterson, Hanley, Mulgrew (McGinn 82), McKenna, Robertson, Ritchie (Murphy 87), McTominay (Armstrong 58), McDonald, Cairney (C McGregor 58), McBurnie (Phillips 77).
Costa Rica: Navas - Gamboa (Smith 75), Acosta, Gonzalez, Duarte, Oviedo (Calvo 78), B Ruiz, Borges, Guzman (Tejeda 56), Colindres (Wallace 64), Urena (Y Ruiz 69).

Mar 23 - Casablanca, Morocco
Senegal 1 (Konate 62)
Uzbekistan 1 (Shukurov pen 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,200. **Ref:** El Jaafari (Mor)
Senegal: P S N'Diaye - Gassama (I Sarr 79), Diagne, A N'Diaye, Djilobodji, C N'Doye, Ngom (Sakho 86), Diousse, Niasse (Saivet 66), Souare (A Traore 74), Konate.
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Komilov, Ismailov, Tukhtakhujaev, Shorakhmedov, Mirzaev (Masharipov 57), Shukurov (Alibaev 69), O Akhmedov, Hamrabekov, Abdulkhalikov (Bikmaev 68), Shomurodov (Rashidov 85).

Mar 23 - Turin, Italy
Serbia 1 (Tadic 37)
Morocco 2 (Ziyech pen 29, Boutaib 40)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 15,700. **Ref:** Guida (Ita)
Serbia: Dmitrovic - Basta, Nikola Maksimovic (Ivanovic 73), D Tosic, Kolarov (Obradovic 78), Matic (Grujic 67), Zivkovic (Milivojevic 46), Ljajic (Prijovic 82), Tadic (Gacinovic 70), Kostic, A Mitrovic.
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Saiss (Da Costa 46), Mendyl, El Ahmadi (S Amrabat 83), Boussoufa, N Amrabat, Ziyech (El Kaabi 90+1), Belhanda, Boutaib (Bouhaddouz 74).

Mar 23 - Singapore
Singapore 3 (Hariss 38, Shahdan pen 66, Shakir 72)
Maldives 2 (Umair 40, Mahudhee 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,453

Mar 23 - Papeete
Tahiti 4 (Li Fung Kuee 25, T Tehau 69, 77, 89)
New Caledonia 3 (Houala 44, Sele pen 61, Outiou 87)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Kawana-Waugh (NZ)
Tahiti: Torohia - Tiaiho (Amau 69), Tepa (Tze-Yu 57), Li Fung Kuee, Paama, Tihoni (Graglia 46), Bourebare, Tetauira, Vahirua (Tau 63), A Tehau, Chan Kat (T Tehau 46).

New Caledonia: Ulile - Gope-Iwate, G Bearune (Wamytan 81), Sansot (Gony 70), Wakanumune, E Bearune (Athale 90), Ounei (Outiou 46), Wamowe (Dahite 65), Sele, Houala (Wahnawe 83), Wadriako.

Mar 23 - Rades
Tunisia 1 (Mohammadi og 71)
Iran 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Nour El Din (Egy)
Tunisia: Ben Mustapha - Benalouane, Maaloul (Haddadi 53), Bronn (Nagguez 46), Sliti (Khenissi 64), Sassi, Skhiri, Khaoui (F Ben Youssef 46), Meriah, Ben Amor (Badri 46), Khazri (Srarfi 80).
Iran: Beiranvand - Cheshmi, Mohammadi, Rezaeian, Khanzadeh (Montazeri 54), Amiri (Jahanbakhsh 75), A Karimi (Ebrahimi 56), Shojaei (Ghoddos 46), Hajsafi, Ghoochannejhad (K Rezaei 56), Ansarifard (Torabi 75).

Mar 23 - Antalya
Turkey 1 (Mehmet Topal 52)
Republic of Ireland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Vincic (Sln)
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Gokhan Gonul, Serdar (Ayhan 82), Caglar, Kaldirim, Okay, Mehmet Topal, Yusuf (Alper 87), Akbaba (Malli 69), Calhanoglu (Irfan 80), Tosun (Enes 65).
Republic of Ireland: Doyle - Duffy, Rice, K Long, Coleman (Doherty 63), Hourihane (Clark 68), Browne (Meyler 68), Hendrick (Judge 80), McClean, Hogan (Horgan 74), Maguire (S Long 63).

Mar 23 - Marbella, Spain
Ukraine 1 (Kravets 32)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Muwallad 38)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 450. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Ukraine: Lunin - Karavaev, Khacheridi (Ordets 70), Rakitskyi, Matviyenko (Sobol 65), Stepanenko (Rotan 46), Tsygankov (Buyalskyi 46), Zinchenko (Malinovskyi 65), Marlos (Besedin 85), Konoplyanka, Kravets.
Saudi Arabia: Al Mosailem - Al Shahrani (Muath 90+1), Osama Hawsawi, Omar Hawsawi, Al Harbi, Al Shehri (Al Mogahwi 61), Otayf, Al Jassim (Abdulfattah Asiri 80), Al Muwallad (Al Kuwaykibi 72), Al Sahlawi (Al Moasher 86), Al Dawsari (Al Fiqi 90+1).

Saturday, March 24

Mar 24 - Yerevan
Armenia 0
Estonia 0
Att: 3,500. **Ref:** Vadachkoria (Geo)
Armenia: Hayrapetyan - Daghbashyan, Haroyan, Ishkhanyan, Ghazaryan (A Grigoryan 46), Mkhitaryan, K Hovhannisyan, Hovsepyan, Kadimyan (E Malakyan 46), Simonyan (Briasco 68), Adamyan (Barseghyan 77).
Estonia: Aksalu - Teniste, Tamm, Vihmann, Klavan, Kallaste (Pikk 46), Kait (Artjom Dmitrijev 90), Mets, Luts (Antonov 77), H Anier (Miller 77), Vassiljev (Zenjov 63).

Mar 24 - Gaborone
Botswana 1 (Sembowa 83)
Lesotho 0
HT: 0-0

Mar 24 - San Pedro del Pinatar, Spain
Canada 1 (Ricketts 54)
New Zealand 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 75. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)
Canada: Borjan - Petrasso (Godinho 45+2), James, Jakovic (Edgar 59), Morgan (Adekugbe 59), Piette, Kaye (Wotherspoon 46), Osorio, Millar, Ricketts (Akindele 70), Larin (Edwards 75).
New Zealand: Crocombe - Brotherton, M Boxall, Mitchell (D Ingham 15), Doyle, McGlinchey (De Jong 60), Payne, Howieson, Lewis (Singh 66), Brockie (Bevan 60), Rojas (Rufer 52).

Mar 24 - Tbilisi
Georgia 4 (Papunashvili 15, Kvilitaia 23, Kazaishvili pen 31, Chakvetadze 40)
Lithuania 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Tean (Mol)
Georgia: Loria - Kakabadze, Kashia (Dvali 62), Kverkvelia, Kankava (Kvekveskiri 62), Kazaishvili (Merebashvili 83), Ananidze (Papunashvili 11), Kvilitaia (Arabuli 73), Chakvetadze (Aburjania 69), Gvilia, Navalovski.
Lithuania: Setkus - Borovskij, L Klimavicius, Girdvainis, Slavickas, Zulpa (Vorobjovas 46), Verbickas (Paulius 81), Novikovas (Lasickas 60), Cernych (Romanovskij 81), Sernas (Laukzemis 72), Valskis (Kuklys 46).

Mar 24 - Netanya
Israel 1 (Hemed 60)
Romania 2 (Stanciu 64, Tucudean 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,953. **Ref:** Masias (Cyp)
Israel: Harush - B Bitton, Taha, Tibi, Tawatha, Kayal (Cohen 46), Natcho (Maman 80), Micha (Levy 46), Melikson (Saba 46), Tal Ben Haim/F (Einbinder 68), Hemed (Turgeman 61).
Romania: Nita - Benzar, D Grigore, Sapunaru, Bancu, Pintilii (Anton 72), Marin (Cicaldau 83), Deac (Chipciu 61), Budescu (Stanciu 61), Grozav (Mitrita 61), Keseru (Tucudean 70).

Mar 24 - Marrakech, Morocco
Kenya 2 (Wanyama pen 15, Miheso 81)
Comoros 2 (Mchangama 20, Bakar 74)
HT: 1-1

Mar 24 - Franconville, France
Kosovo 1 (Zhegrova 48)
Madagascar 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lavis (Fra)
Kosovo: Ujkani - Aliti, Kryeziu, Celina (Zeneli 58), Rrahmani, Vojvoda (Paqarada 64), Muriqi (Nuhiu 62), B Berisha (Rashica 53), Shala, Zhegrova (Voca 77), Kololli.
Madagascar: Adrien - Andriatsima, Voavy, Amada, Randriamparany (Caloin 65), Mombris, Fontaine, Randrianarisoa, Rambeloson (Njakanirina 82), Randriambololona (Rakotoharimalala 57), Nomenjanahary.

Mar 24 - Nouakchott
Mauritania 2 (El Id 51, Voulany 70)
Guinea 0
HT: 0-0. *Sent off: S Diallo (Guinea) 38*

Mar 24 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 2 (Kim Min-jae og 20, Smyth 85)
South Korea 1 (Kwon Chang-hoon 7)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 18,103. **Ref:** Madden (Sco)
Northern Ireland: Carson - Hughes (C McLaughlin 18), McAuley, J Evans (Cathcart 68), Lewis, C Evans (Boyce 62), Saville, Norwood (McNair 72), Jones (Smyth 82), Ward (Washington 62), Magennis.
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Kim Jin-su (Kim Min-woo 35), Jang Hyun-soo, Kim Min-jae, Lee Yong, Lee Jae-sung, Ki Sung-yeung (Jung Woo-young 67), Park Joo-ho (Lee Chang-min 67), Son Heung-min (Yeom Ki-hun 75), Kim Shin-wook, Kwon Chang-hoon (Hwang Hee-chan 62).

Mar 24 - Stockholm
Sweden 1 (Toivonen 23)
Chile 2 (Vidal 22, Bolados 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 48,134. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)
Sweden: Nordfeldt - Lustig (J Larsson 81), Lindelof, Granqvist, M Olsson, G Svensson, S Larsson (Hiljemark 78), Claesson, Forsberg (Sema 79), Toivonen, Berg.
Chile: Herrera - Isla (P Diaz 79), Roco, Maripan, Beausejour, Vidal, Aranguiz, Hernandez (D Valdes 61), Sanchez, Vargas (Castillo 61), Sagal (Bolados 71).

Mar 24 - Beauvais, France
Togo 2 (F Ayite 42, 55)
Ivory Coast 2 (Pepe 17, 24)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 1,000
Togo: Bassa-Djeri - Lawson, Atchou, Ouro-Sama, Dossevi, Koloun, Laba, Dakonam (Gbegnon 90), Bebou, Adebayor, F Ayite (Agbegniadan 71).
Ivory Coast: Mande - Aurier, Bailly, Konan, Kanon, Kessie (Aholou 75), Serey Die, Seri, Pepe, Sio (Cyriac 86), Gradel (Assale 86).

Mar 24 - Kampala
Uganda 3 (Ochaya 20, Juuko 45, Ndugwa 82)
Sao Tome e Principe 1 (Jose Varela 90)
HT: 2-0
Uganda: Onyango - Wadada, Walusimbi (Kakuba 68), Juuko, Mugabi (Awanyi 88), Wasswa, Karisa (Bayo 80), G Kizito (Lwanga 67), Luwagga (Ndugwa 57), Okwi (Sentamu 56), Ochaya.

Sunday, March 25

Mar 25 - Cave Hill
Barbados 0
Bermuda 0

Mar 25 - Santiago de los Caballeros
Dominican Republic 2 (Espinal 56, Modesta 83)
St Kitts & Nevis 1 (Y Mitchum 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Anderson (PR)
Sent off: Reynoso (Dominican Republic) 50; T Leader (St Kitts & Nevis) 78

Mar 25 - San Pedro de Alcantara, Spain
Faroe Islands 3 (Bartalsstovu 12, B Olsen 80, Nattestad 85)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Strombergsson (Swe)
Faroe Islands: Gestsson - Naes (B Olsen 46), Gregersen (S Vatnhamar 46), Hansson (G Vatnhamar 46), Bartalsstovu, Sorensen, Edmundsson (K Olsen 67), Mellemgaard, Baldvinsson (R Joensen 76), Faero, P Johannesen (Nattestad 46).
Liechtenstein: Jehle (B Buchel 46) - Goppel, Rechsteiner (Malin 80), Quintans (Yildiz 58), A Sele, Wieser, Polverino (S Wolfinger 83), Burgmeier (Brandle 46), N Hasler, Erne (Kuhne 83), Salanovic.

Mar 25 - Gibraltar
Gibraltar 1 (Walker 88)
Latvia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,306. **Ref:** Farrugia Cann (Mlt)
Gibraltar: Goldwin - Sergeant, R Chipolina, L Casciaro (Cabrera 40), Bardon, Walker, Gosling (Garcia 90+2), Mascarenhas-Olivero, Annesley (R Casciaro 68), Pons (Bosio 61), Hernandez (De Barr 84).
Latvia: Vanins (Steinbors 46) - Jurkovskis (Gabovs 65), Laizans (Indrans 46), Savalnieks, Sabala (Gauracs 46), Uldrikis (Fjodorovs 57), Kazacoks, Tarasovs (Torres 72), Jagodinskis, Dubra, Kluskins.

Mar 25 - Kingston
Jamaica 1 (A Thomas og 50)
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Byers 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitti (Pan)
Jamaica: Blake - Watson (Morgan 80), Richie (Brown 70), Francis, Lawrence, Fisher, F Reid (Vassell 56), McCarthy, Foster (Benbow 62), Kelly (East 87), R Williams (Hardware 56).
Antigua & Barbuda: Muhammad - Griffith, A Thomas, Francis-Angol (Wildin 87), Romeo, Bowry, Weston, Jahraldo-Martin (Kirwan 79), Browne (Byers 46), T Thomas (Emanuel 90+2), Richards (Parker 69).

Mar 25 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 1 (Al Tararwa 65)
Cameroon 3 (Aboubakar 11, Bassogog 16, 57)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Al Naqbi (UAE)
Cameroon: Onana (Ondoa 31; Kameni 61) - Siani, Bassogog (Bahoken 58), Tawamba, N'Jie (Mandjeck 72), Fai (Nyom 46), Aboubakar, Yaya, Teikeu (Ngadeu 46), Ngah, Moukandjo.

Mar 25 - Fort-de-France
Martinique 0
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Ref: Zabeau (Gdp)
Martinique: Chauvet (Vermignon 46) - Linord, Cretinoir, Herelle, Abaul (Catherine 88), Vitulin, Delem (Barthelery 88), Franciette (Parsemain 46), Pastel (Marajo 79), Yann Thimon (Jougon 62), Marny.
Trinidad & Tobago: Foncette - Gonzales, Cyrus, J Jones, A Jones, Hodge (M Williams 20), Hyland (N Garcia 70), Paul, N Lewis (Joseph 75), Hackshaw (K George 75), L Garcia.

Mar 25 - Managua
Nicaragua 3 (Barrera 9, Galeano 13, Moreno 47)
Cuba 3 (Saname 40, Olivares 81, Caballero 90+1)
HT: 2-1

Monday, March 26

Mar 26 - Elbasan
Albania 0
Norway 1 (Rosted 70)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Zammit (Mlt)
Albania: Strakosha - Hysaj (Lika 65), Mavraj, Ajeti, Aliji, Xhaka, Qaka (Bare 45), Ramadani, Roshi (Balaj 46), Grezda, Sadiku (Lila 65).
Norway: Nyland - Svensson (Elabdellaoui 46), Nordtveit (Rosted 63), Ajer, Meling, Odegaard (Fossum 73), Henriksen, Johansen (Selnaes 78), M Elyounoussi (Daehli 90), T Elyounoussi, Johnsen.

Mar 26 - Felcsut, Hungary
Bulgaria 2 (I Popov pen 23, Bodurov 90+3)
Kazakhstan 1 (Tungyshbayev 55)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Bognar (Hun)
Bulgaria: Iliev - S Popov, Bodurov, Delev, Panov (M Aleksandrov 58), Manolev (Nedelev 57), Slavchev (Raynov 61), Kostadinov, I Popov (Chochev 58), G Milanov (Kirilov 58), Bozhikov.
Kazakhstan: Plotnikov - Suyumbayev, Maliy, Postnikov, Beisebekov, Kuat, Zainutdinov (Paragulgov 46), Islamkhan (Alip 90+4), Murtazayev (Akhmetov 90), Seidakhmet (Pertsukh 78), Khizhnichenko (Tungyshbayev 46).

Mar 26 - Willemstad
Curacao 1 (Bacuna pen 58)
Bolivia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,693. **Ref:** De Leca (Aru)
Curacao: Room - R Martina, Carmelia, Carolina, Statie (Vicento 88), Shermar Martina (Jakoba 27), Benschop (Fernandez 65), Bacuna (Gaari 90+2), E Hooi (Shermaine Martina 79), Antonia, Nepomuceno. *Sent off: Antonia 52.*
Bolivia: Lampe - Ortiz, Diego Bejarano, Pedraza, Sagredo, Haquin, Wayar, J Garcia (Miranda 64), Vargas (Justiniano 62), H Sanchez (Arce 60), Alvarez (Castro 70). *Sent off: Diego Bejarano 52, Pedraza 57.*

Mar 26 - Geneva, Switzerland
Holland 3 (Depay 11, Babel 32, Van Dijk 45+2)
Portugal 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 20,006. **Ref:** Buquet (Fra)
Holland: Cillessen - De Ligt (Fosu-Mensah 84), Van Dijk, Ake, Vilhena (De Vrij 67), Tete (Til 78), Wijnaldum (De Roon 68), Propper, Van de Beek, Depay (Kluivert 78), Babel (Berghuis 84).
Portugal: Anthony Lopes - Mario Rui, Rolando (Luis Neto 46), Jose Fonte, Joao Cancelo, Manuel Fernandes, Andre Gomes (Andre Silva 46), Adrien Silva (Goncalo Guedes 46), Ricardo Quaresma (Gelson Martins 55), Bruno Fernandes (Joao Mario 78), Cristiano Ronaldo (Joao Moutinho 68). *Sent off: Joao Cancelo 62.*

Mar 26 - Belek, Turkey
Malta 0
Finland 5 (Pukki 13, 27, Taimi 23, Jensen 84, Soiri 88)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Gocek (Tur)
Malta: Hogg - Attard, J Borg, S Borg (Johnson 72), Agius, S Pisani (T Caruana 46), R Muscat (R Briffa 46), Gambin, J Zerafa (Beerman 46), Schembri (Effiong 62), J P Farrugia (M Mifsud 46).
Finland: Joronen (Jaakkola 46) - Arajuuri, Taimi (Toivio 82), Lod (Soiri 62), Yaghoubi (Taylor 46), Pukki (Pelvas 77), Sauli Vaisanen, Kamara, Uronen (Pirinen 62), Lam, Jensen.

Tuesday, March 27

Mar 27 - Graz, Austria
Algeria 1 (Chafai 58)
Iran 2 (Azmoun 11, Taremi 19)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Weinberger (Aut)
Algeria: Chaouchi - Bensebaini, Chafai, Mandi, Ferhat, Medjani (Slimani 63), Boukhanchouche, Hanni (Benmoussa 33), Mahrez (El Melali 68), Bounedjah (Abid 82), Soudani.
Iran: Beiranvand - Ghafouri, Montazeri, Aghaei (Mohammadi 73), Khanzadeh, Ezatolahi (Shojaei 46), Hajsafi, Taremi (Amiri 40), Azmoun (Ebrahimi 61), Ansarifard (K Rezaei 71), Jahanbakhsh (Ghoddos 79).

Mar 27 - Yerevan
Armenia 0
Lithuania 1 (Verbickas 45)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Kvirikashvili (Geo)
Armenia: Manukyan - Hovsepyan (A Grigoryan 74), Andonian, Haroyan, Vardanyan (Simonyan 66), Ghazaryan (K Hovhannisyan 46), Darbinyan (Kadimyan 83), Ishkhanyan, Briasco (Ozbiliz 53), Adamyan (Barseghyan 71), Mkhitaryan.
Lithuania: Setkus - Baravykas, L Klimavicius, Jankauskas, Vaitkunas, Vorobjovas (Paulius 90+5), Kuklys (Romanovskij 82), Verbickas (Zulpa 72), Novikovas, Cernych (Laukzemis 90+4), Valskis (Lasickas 77).

Mar 27 - Antalya, Turkey
Azerbaijan 1 (Richard Almeida pen 5)
Macedonia 1 (Trajkovski pen 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Ozkahya (Tur)
Azerbaijan: K Agayev - Garayev, Medvedev, Abdullayev (Mahmudov 90), Alaskarov (Hajiyev 70), Nazarov (Imamverdiyev 59), Abisov, Yunanov (R Kurbanov 59), Richard Almeida (Eyyubov 78), Akhundov (R Mammadov 76), U Abbasov.
Macedonia: Dimitrievski - Ristevski, Musliu, Trickovski (Nestorovski 61), Trajkovski, Pandev (Spirovski 46), Bardhi (Alioski 59), Ristovski, D Velkoski (Zajkov 80), Nikolov (Ademi 69), Radeski.

Mar 27 - Brussels
Belgium 4 (R Lukaku 13, 39, Batshuayi 77, De Bruyne 78)
Saudi Arabia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 22,578. **Ref:** Jug (Sln)
Belgium: Mignolet - Meunier, Alderweireld, Kompany (Vermaelen 46), Vertonghen, Witsel, De Bruyne (Dembele 83), E Hazard (Batshuayi 59), Mertens (Nainggolan 59), Carrasco (Limbombe 46), R Lukaku (Mirallas 79).

Saudi Arabia: Al Qarni (Al Owais 46) - Muath (Al Shahrani 46), Omar Hawsawi, M Hawsawi (Jahfali 86), Al Harbi, Otayf, Al Mogahwi, Al Jassim (Al Khaibari 82), Al Muwallad (Al Shehri 69), Al Dawsari, Al Sahlawi (Al Moasher 54).

Mar 27 - Le Havre, France
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Senegal 0
Att: 2,851. **Ref:** Klossner (Swi)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sehic - Vranjes, Bicakcic (Zakaric 84), Sunjic, Kolasinac (Zukanovic 77), Saric, Cimirot (Medunjanin 60), Dzeko (Bajic 69), Pjanic (Besic 72), Kodro (Duljevic 63), Visca.
Senegal: Diallo - Sabaly, Koulibaly, Djilobodji, A Traore (Wague 83), S Sane, Saivet (A N'Diaye 72), Mane (C N'Doye 87), P A N'Diaye (Ngom 90), M B Diouf (I Sarr 68), Sow (Niang 66).

Mar 27 - London, England
Colombia 0
Australia 0
Att: 25,000. **Ref:** Madley (Eng)
Colombia: Ospina - Arias, Mojica, C Zapata, Murillo (Mina 53), Aguilar (Lerma 46), Barrios, Uribe (Chara 70), Rodriguez (Moreno 83), Bacca (Izquierdo 75), Falcao (Borja 46).
Australia: Jones (Vukovic 46) - Risdon, Behich, Milligan, Degenek, Luongo (Irvine 90+2), Leckie (Rukavytsya 88), Jedinak, Rogic (Troisi 83), Nabbout (Kruse 73), Juric (Cahill 63).

Mar 27 - Aalborg
Denmark 0
Chile 0
Att: 11,527. **Ref:** Beaton (Sco)
Denmark: Schmeichel - Larsen, Kjaer, Boilesen, Knudsen, Schone, Eriksen (Fischer 64), Delaney (Jensen 72), Cornelius, Bendtner (Braithwaite 46), Sisto (Y Poulsen 77).
Chile: Herrera - P Diaz (Lichnovsky 90), Roco, Maripan, Beausejour (Albornoz 64), Hernandez (Pulgar 64), G Medel, Vidal (Bolados 82), Sanchez (Rodriguez 75), Castillo, Sagal (D Valdes 64).

Mar 27 - London
England 1 (Vardy 26)
Italy 1 (Insigne pen 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 82,598. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)
England: Butland - Walker, Stones (Henderson 73), Tarkowski, Trippier (Rose 60), Oxlade-Chamberlain (Lallana 60), Dier, Lingard (Cook 71), Young, Sterling, Vardy (Rashford 71).
Italy: Donnarumma - Zappacosta, Rugani, Bonucci, De Sciglio, Parolo, Jorginho, Pellegrini (Gagliardini 79), Candreva (Chiesa 56), Immobile (Belotti 64), Insigne.

Mar 27 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Tabidze 6, Kazaishvili 35)
Estonia 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)
Georgia: Makaridze - Kakabadze, Tabidze, Kverkvelia (Kashia 84), Kankava, Kazaishvili, Kvekveskiri, Kacharava (Arabuli 70; Kvilitaia 77), Shergelashvili (Dvali 63), Merebashvili (Jigauri 63), Papunashvili (Aburjania 82).
Estonia: Meerits - Teniste (Elhi 71), Morozov, Tamm, Klavan, Pikk (Kruglov 63), Kait (Vassiljev 75), Antonov (Artjom Dmitrijev 46), Lepistu (Aleksandr Dmitrijev 71), Zenjov, H Anier (Luts 46).

Mar 27 - Berlin
Germany 0
Brazil 1 (Gabriel Jesus 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 72,717. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Germany: Trapp - Kimmich, Rudiger, Boateng (Sule 68), Plattenhardt, Gundogan (Werner 81), Kroos, Goretzka (Brandt 61), Draxler, Sane (Stindl 61), Gomez (Wagner 62).
Brazil: Alisson - Daniel Alves, Thiago Silva, Miranda, Marcelo, Casemiro, Willian, Paulinho, Fernandinho, Philippe Coutinho (Douglas Costa 73), Gabriel Jesus.

Mar 27 - Zurich, Switzerland
Greece 1 (Karelis 29)
Egypt 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Jaccottet (Swi)
Greece: Gianniotis (Barkas 46) - K Papadopoulos, Bakakis (Torosidis 89), Christodoulopoulos (Gianniotas 64), Tzavellas, Pelkas, Donis (Bakasetas 46), Tziolis, Tachtsidis (Kourbelis 74), Karelis, Stafylidis (Lykogiannis 71).
Egypt: Awad - Elmohamady, Samir, Gabr, Gaber (Ashraf 62), Elneny, Ashour (Said 64), Sobhi (Shikabala 79), Afsha (Warda 46), Zakaria (El Shahat 46), Mohsen (Kahraba 66).

Mar 27 - Budapest
Hungary 0
Scotland 1 (Phillips 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Lechner (Aut)
Hungary: Gulacsi - Fiola, Otigba, Guzmics, Lovrencsics, Kleinheisler (Patkai 67), Hangya (Szabo 46), Pinter (Elek 46), Varga (Nikolic 83), Szalai (Bode 77), Dzsudzsak (Nemeth 58).
Scotland: A McGregor - Hendry, Mulgrew, McKenna, Fraser (Paterson 81), Robertson (Douglas 66), Armstrong (McLean 70), McGinn, C McGregor (Cummings 90+2), Forrest (Christie 77), Phillips (McBurnie 83).

Mar 27 - Marrakech, Morocco
Kenya 2 (Johanna 17, Olunga 83)
Central African Republic 3 (Kethevoama 15, Dagoulou 64, Momi pen 72)
HT: 1-1
Sent off: Athuman (Kenya) 76

Mar 27 - Franconville, France
Kosovo 2 (Muriqi 74, Paqarada 89)
Burkina Faso 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** Benchabane (Fra)
Kosovo: Ujkani - Aliti, Kryeziu, Zeneli (Rashica 46), Rrahmani, Paqarada, Nuhiu (Rashani 46), Kololli (Vojvoda 69), Shala (Voca 29), Taipi (Celina 46), Zhegrova (Muriqi 46).
Burkina Faso: Koffi (Diakite 89) - Yago, Dayo, B Kone, Y Coulibaly (Bance 80), C Kabore (Lingani 62), Dabo (Paro 46), Pitroipa, B Traore (Bande 74), Nakoulma, Diawara (Sanogo 62).
Sent off: Koffi 87, Bance 90+3.

Mar 27 - Vientiane
Laos 2 (Kongmathilath 30, pen 45+2)
Bangladesh 2 (Jafar 82, Sufil 90+3)
HT: 2-0

Mar 27 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Austria 4 (Arnautovic 4, Grillitsch 39, Gregoritsch 59, Schaub 84)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 2,123. **Ref:** Nevalainen (Fin)
Luxembourg: Moris - Malget (Mahmutovic 46), Philipps, Carlson, Jans, Gerson, Barreiro (Skenderovic 63), Janisch (Da Mota 58), V Thill (Sinani 75), Turpel (Deville 46), Rodrigues.
Austria: Siebenhandl - Bauer, Prodl, Dragovic, Ulmer, Baumgartlinger (Schlager 65), Grillitsch (Zulj 80), Lazaro (Schopf 62), Gregoritsch (Burgstaller 75), Kainz (Schaub 62), Arnautovic (Hierlander 68).

Mar 27 - Arlington, USA
Mexico 0
Croatia 1 (Rakitic pen 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 79,128. **Ref:** Escobar (Gtm)
Mexico: Ochoa - Ayala, Araujo (D Reyes 16; Salcedo 46; Alvarez 68), Moreno, Pizarro (Layun 46), Guardado (R Jimenez 60), Govea (Molina 46), Jorge Hernandez, Vela, Javier Hernandez, Lozano.
Croatia: L Kalinic - Pivaric, Corluka (Nizic 74), Vida, Vrsaljko (Jedvaj 34), Badelj (Bradaric 45+1), Rakitic (Cop 76), Pjaca (Rog 60), Kovacic, Rebic (Pasalic 72), Kramaric.

Mar 27 - Beauvais, France
Moldova 1 (Ionita 59)
Ivory Coast 2 (Assale 20, Pepe 44)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Nuza (Kos)
Moldova: Koselev - Jardan, Carp (Cebotaru 72), Posmac, Epureanu, Ionita, Gatcan, Dedov (Antoniuc 56), Ginsari (Paireli 86), Cociuc (Platica 80), Reabciuk (Rozgoniuc 65).
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - A Traore, Aurier, Kanon (Deli 57), Bailly, Serey Die (Diomande 81), Seri (Angban 66), Aholou, Gradel, Pepe (Cyriac 61), Assale.

Mar 27 - Ulan Bator
Mongolia 0
Mauritius 2 (Justin 5, Augustin 35)
HT: 0-2

Mar 27 - Podgorica
Montenegro 2 (Ivanic 45+1, Mugosa 87)
Turkey 2 (Cengiz 11, Okay 24)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Montenegro: Petkovic - Marusic (Stojkovic 79), Savic (Boljevic 89), Simic, Tomasevic, N Vukcevic, Scekic, Jankovic (Klimenta 90+1), Vesovic, Ivanic (Mugosa 67), Beqiraj (Jovovic 79).
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Ayhan, Mehmet Topal, Caglar, Kaldirim (Bayram 76), Mahmut, Okay (Irfan 46), Cengiz (Malli 78), Yusuf (Akbaba 70), Calhanoglu (Gurler 70), Tosun (Enes 76).

Mar 27 - Casablanca
Morocco 2 (El Kaabi 3, Da Costa 43)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** N'Diaye (Sen)
Morocco: El Kajoui (Tagnaouti 46) - El Hajjam (Saidi 81), Da Costa, Saiss (Nahiri 62), Hakimi, S Amrabat, Fajr, Harit, Bammou (Ziyech 72), Labyad (Boufal 46), El Kaabi (Azaro 62).
Uzbekistan: Suyunov - Ashurmatov, Azamov, Zoteev (Komilov 76), Mukhammadiev, Musaev (Hamrabekov 44), Alibaev (Shukurov 69), Siddikov (Shomurodov 83), Masharipov, Rashidov (Mirzaev 55), Bikmaev (Abdulkhalikov 55).

Mar 27 - Windhoek
Namibia 2 (Ngaruka 64, Shilongo 80)
Lesotho 1 (Motebang 44)
HT: 0-1

Mar 27 - Harrison, USA
Peru 3 (Tapia 3, Ruidiaz 58, Farfan 76)
Iceland 1 (Fjoluson 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 25,219. **Ref:** Unkel (USA)
Peru: Caceda - Advincula (Corzo 86), Ramos, Santamaria, Trauco, Tapia, Flores, Cueva (Hurtado 81), Carrillo, Farfan (Da Silva 78), Ruidiaz (Benavente 66).
Iceland: Schram - O Skulason, Fjoluson, R Sigurdsson, Hermannsson, R Gislason (Traustason 57), B Bjarnason (Ingason 77), A Skulason (B Saevarsson 79), J Gudmundsson (Kjartansson 73), K Finnbogason (E Bjarnason 63), B Sigurdarson.

Mar 27 - Chorzow
Poland 3 (Lewandowski 32, Grosicki 45, Zielinski 90+1)
South Korea 2 (Lee Chang-min 85, Hwang Hee-chan 87)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 53,129. **Ref:** Hansen (Nor)
Poland: Szczesny (Skorupski 46) - Piszczek (Cionek 46), Glik (Kedziora 67), Pazdan, Jedrzejczyk, Romanczuk (Milik 61), Maczynski, Rybus (Kurzawa 84), Zielinski, Grosicki, Lewandowski (Teodorczyk 46).
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Lee Yong (Choi Chul-soon 46), Hong Jeong-ho (Yun Young-sun 46), Jang Hyun-soo, Kim Min-jae (Hwang Hee-chan 38), Park Joo-ho, Kwon Chang-hoon, Jung Woo-young, Ki Sung-yueng (Lee Chang-min 80), Lee Jae-sung (Kim Shin-wook 62), Son Heung-min.

Mar 27 - Craiova
Romania 1 (Rotariu 57)
Sweden 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Reinshreiber (Isr)
Romania: Tatarusanu - Manea, Sapunaru, D Grigore (Nedelcearu 83), Tosca, Pintilii, Marin (Anton 70), Chipciu (Grozav 62), Stanciu (Man 87), Mitrita (Rotariu 54), Tucudean (Keseru 63).
Sweden: Johnsson - J Larsson, P Jansson, Helander, Hult, Durmaz (Claesson 83), Fransson (S Larsson 85), Hiljemark, Sema, Guidetti (Berg 85), Kiese Thelin (Toivonen 71).

Mar 27 - St Petersburg
Russia 1 (Smolov 68)
France 3 (Mbappe 40, 83, Pogba 49)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 51,165. **Ref:** Mazeika (Lit)
Russia: Lunev - Neustadter, Kudryashov (Cheryshev 83), Granat, Samedov (Smolnikov 46), Erokhin (Shvets 76), Zhirkov (Rausch 46), Golovin, Dzagoev (Anton Miranchuk 54), Aleksey Miranchuk (Zabolotniy 66), Smolov.
France: Lloris - Pavard, Koscielny, Umtiti (Kimpembe 80), Hernandez, Kante (Tolisso 66), Pogba, Rabiot (Matuidi 80), Dembele (Giroud 72), Martial (Griezmann 59), Mbappe (Lemar 86).

Mar 27 - London, England
Serbia 2 (A Mitrovic 68, 81)
Nigeria 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Pawson (Eng)
Serbia: Stojkovic - Rukavina, Ivanovic, Nastasic, Kolarov, Milivojevic, Matic (Grujic 65), Tadic (Nemanja Maksimovic 90), Ljajic (Zivkovic 80), Kostic (Gacinovic 88), A Mitrovic.
Nigeria: Uzoho - Ebuehi, Troost-Ekong, Awaziem, Idowu (Aina 85), Ndidi (Agu 85), Onazi (Ogu 77), Obi (Simon 77), Iwobi (Ajayi 88), Moses (Ighalo 46), Musa.

May 27 - Victoria
Seychelles 0
Swaziland 0

Mar 27 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 0
Belarus 2 (Skavysh 36, Saroka 90+2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Jovic (Cro)
Slovenia: Belec - Milec, Cesar (Krajnc 6), Mitrovic, Jokic, Krhin, Kampl (Crnigoj 69), Kurtic, Birsa (Bezjak 65), Ilicic (Zajc 46), Beric (Sporar 76).
Belarus: Gorbunov - Shitov, Politevich, Kendysh, Kovalev (Saroka 69), Bressan (Kislyak 75), Skavysh (Matveichyk 81), Nekhaychik (Stasevich 46), Sivakov, Maevski (Dragun 46), Veretsilo (Volodko 76).

Mar 27 - Madrid
Spain 6 (Diego Costa 12, Isco 26, 52, 74, Thiago 55, Iago Aspas 73)
Argentina 1 (Otamendi 39)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 65,541. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)
Spain: De Gea - Carvajal, Pique (Azpilicueta 71), Sergio Ramos, Jordi Alba (Marcos Alonso 78), Koke, Thiago (Parejo 81), Iniesta (Saul 55), Isco (Lucas Vazquez 75), Diego Costa (Iago Aspas 46), Marco Asensio.
Argentina: Romero (Caballero 22) - Bustos (Mercado 61), Otamendi, Rojo, Tagliafico, Biglia, Mascherano (Pavon 56), Lo Celso (Acuna 83), Banega (P Perez 61), Meza, Higuain (Martinez 58).

Mar 27 - Lucerne
Switzerland 6 (Dzemaili 22, Xhaka pen 31, Embolo 33, Zuber 39, Gavranovic 49, Frei 69)
Panama 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 8,600. **Ref:** Drachta (Aut)
Switzerland: Burki - Lang (Lichtsteiner 69), Elvedi, Djourou, Moubandje, G Fernandes (Frei 58), Xhaka (Schar 69), Dzemaili (Drmic 46), Embolo (Freuler 46), Zuber, Gavranovic (Seferovic 58).
Panama: Penedo - Murillo (Quintero 46), Machado, R Torres, Cummings, G Gomez, Godoy, Ovalle, G Torres (Nurse 46), Camargo (Barcenas 34), Avila (Cooper 46).

Mar 27 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 2 (Samatta 74, Kichuya 86)
DR Congo 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,000
Tanzania: Manula - Kapombe, Michael, Banda, Yondani, Mao (M Yahya 76), Issa (Ajib 59), Nyoni, Samatta, Msuva (Z Yahya 90+4), Kichuya (Mandawa 87).
DR Congo: Matampi - Mpeko, Ngoda, Bangala, Moke Abro, Tshibola (Mabidi 46), Mbemba, Mubele (Kabananga 56), Kebano, Afobe (Assombalonga 64), Bolasie (Akolo 72).

Mar 27 - Nice, France
Tunisia 1 (Khazri 36)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,918. **Ref:** Schneider (Fra)
Tunisia: Hassen - Bronn (Benalouane 90+1), S Ben Youssef, Meriah, Maaloul (Haddadi 33), Sassi, Skhiri, Khaoui (F Ben Youssef 58), Badri (Ayadi 86), Sliti (Khenissi 65), Khazri (Srarfi 74).
Costa Rica: Navas - Gamboa (Oviedo 85), Acosta, Waston, Duarte, Calvo, Borges, Tejeda (Azofeifa 65), Colindres (Segura 58), Urena (Mitchell 72), B Ruiz (Y Ruiz 85).

Mar 27 - Kampala
Uganda 0
Malawi 0
Att: 8,000. **Ref:** Hakizimana (Rwa)
Uganda: Onyango - Iguma (Wadada 86), Walusimbi, Mugabi, Juuko, Lwanga, Wasswa, Karisa (Ndugwa 52), Okwi (Luwagga 60), Sentamu (Nsibambi 62), Ochaya (Bayo 90+4).
Malawi: Swini - Sambani, Chembezi, Mzava, Chirwa, J Banda, Namwera (F Banda 46), Kaonga, Sailesi (Phiri 71), Ngalande, Mbulu (Musowoya 46).

Mar 27 - Liege, Belgium
Ukraine 2 (Ueda og 21, Karavaev 69)
Japan 1 (Makino 41)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,529. **Ref:** Vertenten (Blg)
Ukraine: Pyatov - Butko (Karavaev 62), Sobol (Matviyenko 62), Ordets, Rakitskyi, Stepanenko, Malinovskyi (Buyalskyi 62), Konoplyanka (Tsygankov 79), Marlos (Petryak 90+2), Zinchenko (Rotan 79), Besedin.
Japan: Kawashima - Nagatomo, Makino, G Sakai, Ueda, Shibasaki (Nakajima 79), Yamaguchi, Hasebe (Misao 81), Honda (Kubo 64), Haraguchi (Usami 87), Sugimoto (Yu Kobayashi 56).

Mar 27 - Cary
United States 1 (Wood pen 45)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,895. **Ref:** Ward (SKN)
United States: Steffen - Yedlin, Miazga, Carter-Vickers, Villafana, Trapp, Nagbe (Roldan 90+2), Delgado (Weah 86), Adams, Saief (Rubin 67), Wood (Novakovich 77).
Paraguay: Fernandez - B Valdez, Balbuena, Gomez, Alonso, C Riveros (R Ortiz 65), R Rojas (Gonzalez 83), O Romero (Dominguez 80), Camacho (Perez 54), Almiron, Santander.

Club football

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st knockout round (last 16)

1st legs

Feb13
Basle (Swi) 0
Manchester City (Eng) 4 (Gundogan 14, 53, Bernardo Silva 18, Aguero 23)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 36,000. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)

Juventus (Ita) 2 (Higuain 2, pen 9)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 2 (Kane 35, Eriksen 71)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 41,232. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)

Feb14
Porto (Por) 0
Liverpool (Eng) 5 (Mane 25, 53, 85, Salah 29, Roberto Firmino 69)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 47,718. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)

Real Madrid (Spa) 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 45, 83, Marcelo 86)
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 1 (Rabiot 33)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 78,158. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)

Feb 20
Bayern Munich (Ger) 5 (Muller 43, 66, Coman 53, Lewandowski 79, 88)
Besiktas (Tur) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Sent off: Vida (Besiktas) 16

Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Willian 62)
Barcelona (Spa) 1 (Messi 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 37,741. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)

Feb 21
Sevilla (Spa) 0
Manchester United (Eng) 0
Att: 39,725. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)

Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 2 (Ferreyra 52, Fred 71)
Roma (Ita) 1 (Cengiz 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,124. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)

2nd legs

Mar 6
Liverpool 0
Porto 0
Att: 48,768. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)
Liverpool 5-0 on agg

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Cavani 71)
Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 51, Casemiro 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 46,585. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Sent off: Verratti (PSG) 66
Real Madrid 5-2 on agg

Mar 7
Manchester City 1 (Gabriel Jesus 8)
Basle 2 (Elyounoussi 17, Lang 71)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 49,411. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)
Manchester City 5-2 on agg

Tottenham Hotspur 1 (Son 39)
Juventus 2 (Higuain 64, Dybala 67)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 84,010. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)
Juventus 4-3 on agg

Mar13
Manchester United 1 (Lukaku 84)
Sevilla 2 (Ben Yedder 74, 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 74,909. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)
Sevilla 2-1 on agg

Roma 1 (Dzeko 52)
Shakhtar Donetsk 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,693.
Ref: Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Sent off: Ordets (Shakhtar) 79
Agg 2-2; Roma on away goals

Mar14
Barcelona 3 (Messi 3, 63, Dembele 20)
Chelsea 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 97,183. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Barcelona 4-1 on agg

Besiktas 1 (Vagner Love 59)
Bayern Munich 3 (Thiago 18, Gokhan og 46, Wagner 84)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 36,885. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)
Bayern Munich 8-1 on agg

EUROPA LEAGUE

2nd knockout round (last 16)

1st legs - Mar 8; 2nd legs - Mar15
Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 3-0, 5-1 (agg 8-1); Borussia Dortmund (Ger) v Salzburg (Aut) 1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2); CSKA Moscow (Rus) v Lyon (Fra) 0-1, 3-2 (agg 3-3, CSKA Moscow on away goals); Lazio (Ita) v Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) 2-2, 2-0 (agg 4-2); Marseille (Fra) v Athletic Bilbao (Spa) 3-1, 2-1 (agg 5-2); Milan (Ita) v Arsenal (Eng) 0-2, 1-3 (agg 1-5); RB Leipzig (Ger) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Sporting Lisbon (Por) v Viktoria Plzen (CzR) 2-0, 1-2 (aet) (agg 3-2)

SOUTH AMERICA

RECOPA

(Libertadores Cup holders Gremio v Sudamericana Cup holders Independiente)

1st leg

Feb14
Independiente (Arg) 1 (Bruno Cortez og 33)
Gremio (Bra) 1 (Luan 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 47,000. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)
Independiente: Campana - Bustos (Figal 83), Franco, Amorebieta, Silva, Domingo, Gaibor (Gutierrez 67), Benitez (Fernandez 64), Meza, Menendez, Gigliotti. *Sent off: Gigliotti 28.*
Gremio: Marcelo Grohe - Leo Moura, Pedro Geromel, Kannemann, Bruno Cortez, Jailson, Lima (Alisson 53), Maicon, Cicero (Jael 85), Everton (Maicosuel 85), Luan.

2nd leg

Feb 21
Gremio 0
Independiente 0
Agg1-1; Gremio 5-4 on pens
Aet. **Att:** 42,921. **Ref:** Caceres (Par)
Gremio: Marcelo Grohe - Leo Moura (Paulo Miranda 22), Pedro Geromel, Kannemann, Bruno Cortez (Lima 116), Jailson (Jael 62), Maicon, Alisson (Maicosuel 81), Cicero, Everton, Luan.
Independiente: Campana - Bustos (Gutierrez 108), Franco, Amorebieta, Silva, Rodriguez (Benitez 46), Domingo, Meza, Gaibor, Menendez (S Romero 75), Fernandez (Figal 45). *Sent off: Amorebieta 42.*

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st round

1st legs - Mar 6/7; 2nd legs - Mar17/18
Aduana Stars (Gha) v ES Setif (Alg) 1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4); Al Ahly (Egy) v Mounana (Gab) 4-0, 3-1 (agg 7-1); Difaa El Jadida (Mor) v AS Vita (DRC) 1-0, 2-2 (agg 3-2); Etoile Sahel (Tun) v Plateau United (Nga) 4-2, 0-1 (agg 4-3); Gor Mahia (Ken) v Esperance Tunis (Tun) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); Horoya (Gui) v Generation Foot (Sen) 2-1, 2-0 (agg 4-1); MFM (Nga) v MC Alger (Alg) 2-1, 0-6 (agg 2-7); Primeiro Agosto (Ang) v Bidvest Wits (SAf) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Primeiro Agosto 3-2 on pens); Rayon Sports (Rwa) v Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2); Saint George (Eth) v KCCA (Uga) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); Togo Port (Tog) v Al Hilal Omdurman (Sud) 2-0, 1-3 (agg 3-3, Togo Port on away goals); TP Mazembe (DRC) v Uniao Songo (Moz) 4-0, 0-3 (agg 4-3); Wydad Casablanca (Mor) v WAC (IvC) 7-2, 0-2 (agg 7-4); Young Africans (Tan) v Township Rollers (Bot) 1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2); Zanaco (Zam) v Mbabane Swallows (Swa) 1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3); Zesco United (Zam) v ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0-1, 2-1 (agg 2-2, Zesco United on away goals)

● *The winning teams have qualified for the group stage; the losing teams enter the Confederation Cup in the play-off round*

CONFEDERATION CUP

1st round

1st legs - Mar 6/7; 2nd legs - Mar16-18
Al Ittihad (Lby) v Akwa United (Nga) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Akwa United 3-2 on pens);
AS Port-Louis 2000 (Mrs) v Fosa Juniors (Mad) 0-2, 0-1 (agg 0-3); CARA (Con) v Ben Guerdane (Tun) 3-0, 1-3 (agg 4-3); Costa do Sol (Moz) v Cape Town City (SAf) 0-1, 2-1 (agg 2-2, Costa do Sol on away goals); CR Belouizdad (Alg) v Nkana (Zam) 3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1); DC Motema Pembe (DRC) v Deportivo Niefang (EqG) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Djoliba (Mli) v APR (Rwa) 1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, Djoliba on away goals); Energie (Ben) v Enyimba (Nga) 0-2, 2-3 (agg 2-5);
La Mancha (Con) v Al Ahli Shendi (Sud) 3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2); Maniema Union (DRC) v USM Alger (Alg) 2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3, USM Alger on away goals); Olympic Star (Bdi) v Al Hilal Obayed (Sud) 0-0, 0-6 (agg 0-6);
Petro Atletico (Ang) v SuperSport United (SAf) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Raja Casablanca (Mor) v Nouadhibou (Mra) 1-1, 4-2 (agg 5-3);
RS Berkane (Mor) v Club Africain (Tun) 3-1, 1-0 (agg 4-1); Simba (Tan) v Al Masry (Egy) 2-2, 0-0 (agg 2-2, Al Masry on away goals);
Welayta Dicha (Eth) v Zamalek (Egy) 2-1, 1-2 (agg 3-3, Welayta Dicha 4-3 on pens)

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Mar 6/7; 2nd legs - Mar13/14
America (Mex) v Tauro (Pan) 4-0, 3-1 (agg 7-1); Seattle Sounders (USA) v Guadalajara (Mex) 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3); Tijuana (Mex) v New York Red Bulls (USA) 0-2, 1-3 (agg 1-5); Toronto (Can) v Tigres (Mex) 2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4, Toronto on away goals)

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hoppers (C)	18	11	4	3	29	23	37
Five Islands	18	10	5	3	35	17	35
Parham	18	8	4	6	31	23	28
Grenades	18	7	5	6	27	24	26
Tryum	18	7	5	6	25	30	26
Swetes	18	5	7	6	27	26	22
SAP	18	5	6	7	25	33	21
Old Road[1]	18	5	5	8	28	29	20
Pigotts B'ts (R)	18	5	4	9	17	24	19
Empire (R)	18	3	3	12	21	36	12

[1]*Enter rel/prom play-offs*

ST LUCIA

2018 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Platinum (C)	7	4	3	0	18	3	15
VSADC	7	4	3	0	13	9	15
Ti Rocher	7	2	4	1	15	11	10
Uptown Rebels	7	2	4	1	6	3	10
Big Players	7	3	1	3	11	13	10
Northern Utd	7	2	2	3	10	11	8
Allez (R)	7	0	4	3	9	15	4
RV Juniors (R)	7	0	1	6	6	23	1

ASIA

INDIA (Indian Super League)

2017-18 Championship Final
Mar 17: Bengaluru 2 Chennaiyin 3.

PALESTINE (Gaza)

2017-18 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shabab KY (C)	22	13	6	3	36	21	45
K'mat Rafah	22	11	7	4	26	12	40
Al Sadaqa	22	11	6	5	33	17	39
Al Ittihad Sh'a	22	9	6	7	35	25	33
Shabab Jabalia	22	9	6	7	24	27	33
Shabab Rafah	22	8	7	7	29	27	31
Gaza SC	22	9	3	10	27	25	30
K'mat Shatea	22	6	7	9	25	34	25
Al Ittihad KY	22	6	7	9	19	29	25
Al Hilal Gaza	22	6	5	11	20	29	23
Al Qadisiya (R)	22	3	9	10	22	33	18
Al Ahli Gaza (R)	22	3	7	12	28	45	16

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions; (R) = relegated; (QF) = qualified for finals

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MLS 2018

ATLANTA UNITED

GOALKEEPERS

1	Brad **GUZAN**	(33) 09.09.84
27	Mitch **HILDEBRANDT**	(29) 12.11.88
25	Alec **KANN**	(27) 08.08.90

DEFENDERS

22	Mikey **AMBROSE**	(24) 05.10.93
21	George **BELLO**	(16) 22.01.02
2	Franco **ESCOBAR** (Arg)	(23) 21.02.95
4	Greg **GARZA**	(26) 16.08.91
5	Leandro **GONZALEZ PIREZ** (Arg)	(26) 26.02.92
13	Jose **HERNANDEZ** (Ven)	(20) 26.06.97
3	Michael **PARKHURST**	(34) 24.01.84
12	Miles **ROBINSON**	(21) 14.03.97
14	Sal **ZIZZO**	(31) 03.04.87

MIDFIELDERS

10	Miguel **ALMIRON** (Par)	(24) 10.02.94
8	Ezequiel **BARCO** (Arg)	(19) 29.03.99
30	Andrew **CARLETON**	(17) 22.06.00
20	Chris **GOSLIN**	(17) 12.05.00
24	Julian **GRESSEL** (Ger)	(24) 16.12.93
32	Kevin **KRATZ** (Ger)	(31) 21.01.87
23	Lagos **KUNGA**	(19) 20.10.98
18	Jeff **LARENTOWICZ**	(34) 05.08.83
16	Chris **McCANN** (Rol)	(30) 21.07.87
6	Darlington **NAGBE**	(27) 19.07.90
29	Oliver **SHANNON** (Eng)	(22) 12.09.95
28	Andrew **WHEELER-OMIUNU**	(23) 30.11.94

FORWARDS

26	Jon **GALLAGHER** (Rol)	(22) 23.02.96
7	Josef **MARTINEZ** (Ven)	(24) 19.05.93
19	Brandon **VAZQUEZ**	(19) 14.10.98
15	Hector **VILLALBA** (Arg)	(23) 26.07.94
9	Romario **WILLIAMS** (Jam)	(23) 15.08.94

COACH

Gerardo **MARTINO** (Arg)		(55) 20.11.62

CHICAGO FIRE

GOALKEEPERS

30	Stefan **CLEVELAND**	(23) 25.05.94
32	Patrick **McLAIN**	(29) 22.08.88
45	Richard **SANCHEZ** (Mex)	(23) 05.05.94

DEFENDERS

16	Jonathan **CAMPBELL**	(24) 27.06.93
25	Jorge **CORRALES** (Cub)	(26) 20.05.91
26	Christian **DEAN**	(25) 14.03.93
5	Kevin **ELLIS**	(26) 30.06.91
4	Johan **KAPPELHOF** (Hol)	(27) 05.08.90
15	Grant **LILLARD**	(22) 05.12.95
27	Rafael **RAMOS** (Por)	(23) 09.01.95
3	Brandon **VINCENT**	(23) 01.05.94

MIDFIELDERS

19	Mo **ADAMS** (Eng)	(21) 23.09.96
13	Brandt **BRONICO**	(22) 20.06.95
28	Elliot **COLLIER** (NZ)	(23) 22.02.95
18	Drew **CONNER**	(24) 18.02.94
20	Daniel **JOHNSON**	(22) 08.09.95
10	Aleksander **KATAI** (Ser)	(27) 06.02.91
6	Dax **McCARTY**	(30) 30.04.87
14	Djordje **MIHAILOVIC**	(19) 10.11.98
2	Matt **POLSTER**	(24) 08.06.93
31	Bastian **SCHWEINSTEIGER** (Ger)	(33) 01.08.84
12	Tony **TCHANI** (Cam)	(29) 13.04.89

FORWARDS

22	Jon **BAKERO** (Spa)	(21) 05.11.96
21	Alan **GORDON**	(36) 16.10.81
8	Michael **DE LEEUW** (Hol)	(31) 07.10.86
23	Nemanja **NIKOLIC** (Hun)	(30) 31.12.87
9	Luis **SOLIGNAC** (Arg)	(27) 16.02.91

COACH

Veljko **PAUNOVIC** (Ser)		(40) 21.08.77

COLORADO RAPIDS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Tim **HOWARD**	(39) 06.03.79
18	Zac **MacMATH**	(26) 07.08.91
-	Thomas **OLSEN**	(23) 14.02.95

DEFENDERS

2	Edgar **CASTILLO**	(31) 08.10.86
23	Kip **COLVEY** (NZ)	(24) 15.03.94
24	Kortne **FORD**	(22) 26.01.96
94	Marlon **HAIRSTON**	(24) 23.03.94
3	Eric **MILLER**	(25) 15.01.93
44	Axel **SJOBERG** (Swe)	(27) 08.03.91
5	Tommy **SMITH** (NZ)	(28) 31.03.90
33	Jared **WATTS**	(26) 03.02.92
4	Danny **WILSON** (Sco)	(26) 27.12.91
27	Deklan **WYNNE** (NZ)	(23) 20.03.95

MIDFIELDERS

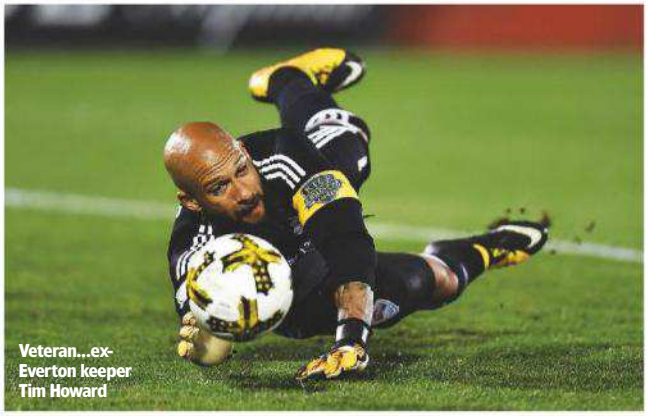
21	Bismark **ADJEI-BOATENG** (Gha)	(23) 10.05.94
7	Stefan **AIGNER** (Ger)	(30) 20.08.87
22	Micheal **AZIRA** (Uga)	(30) 22.08.87
8	Johan **BLOMBERG** (Swe)	(30) 14.06.87
15	Sam **HAMILTON**	(22) 26.07.95
90	Enzo **MARTNEZ** (Uru)	(27) 29.09.90
19	Jack **PRICE** (Eng)	(25) 19.12.92
17	Dillon **SERNA**	(24) 25.03.94

FORWARDS

14	Dominique **BADJI** (Sen)	(25) 16.10.92
9	Yannick **BOLI** (IvC)	(30) 13.01.88
11	Shkelzen **GASHI** (Alb)	(29) 15.07.88
12	Niki **JACKSON**	(22) 25.08.95
40	Joe **MASON** (Rol)	(26) 13.05.91
32	Jack **McBEAN**	(23) 15.12.94

COACH

Anthony **HUDSON** (Eng)		(37) 11.03.81



Veteran...ex-Everton keeper Tim Howard

COLUMBUS CREW

GOALKEEPERS

24	Jon **KEMPIN**	(25) 08.04.93
30	Logan **KETTERER**	(24) 09.11.93
23	Zack **STEFFEN**	(23) 02.04.95

DEFENDERS

17	Lalas **ABUBAKAR** (Gha)	(23) 25.12.94
25	Harrison **AFFUL** (Gha)	(31) 24.07.86
31	Connor **MALONEY**	(22) 18.05.95
18	Cristian **MARTINEZ** (Pan)	(21) 06.02.97
4	Jonathan **MENSAH** (Gha)	(27) 13.07.90
22	Gaston **SAURO** (Arg)	(28) 23.02.90
19	Milton **VALENZUELA** (Arg)	(19) 13.08.98
3	Josh **WILLIAMS**	(30) 18.04.88

MIDFIELDERS

8	Mohammed **ABU** (Gha)	(26) 14.11.91
7	**ARTUR** (Bra)	(22) 11.03.96
26	Luis **ARGUDO**	(22) 13.12.95
2	Ricardo **CLARK**	(35) 10.02.83
13	Mike **GRELLA**	(31) 23.01.87
28	Niko **HANSEN** (Den)	(23) 14.09.94
10	Federico **HIGUAIN** (Arg)	(33) 25.10.84
16	Hector **JIMENEZ**	(29) 03.11.88
20	Eduardo **SOSA** (Ven)	(21) 20.06.96
6	Wil **TRAPP**	(25) 15.01.93

FORWARDS

14	Adam **JAHN**	(27) 05.01.91
27	Edward **OPOKU** (Gha)	(20) 01.08.97
9	Pedro **SANTOS** (Por)	(29) 22.04.88
11	Gyasi **ZARDES**	(26) 02.09.91

COACH

Gregg **BERHALTER**		(44) 01.08.73

DALLAS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jesse **GONZALEZ**	(22) 25.05.95
14	Jimmy **MAURER**	(29) 14.10.88
30	Kyle **ZOBECK**	(28) 06.02.90

DEFENDERS

2	Reggie **CANNON**	(19) 11.06.98
31	Maynor **FIGUEROA** (Hon)	(34) 02.05.83
24	Matt **HEDGES**	(28) 01.04.90
6	Anton **NEDYALKOV** (Bul)	(24) 30.04.93
32	Kris **REAVES**	(22) 10.11.95
3	Reto **ZIEGLER** (Swi)	(32) 16.01.86

MIDFIELDERS

23	Kellyn **ACOSTA**	(22) 24.07.95
21	Michael **BARRIOS** (Col)	(26) 21.04.91
10	Mauro **DIAZ** (Arg)	(27) 10.03.91
7	Carlos **GRUEZO** (Ecu)	(23) 19.04.95
15	Jacori **HAYES**	(22) 29.06.95
12	Ryan **HOLLINGSHEAD**	(27) 16.04.91
19	Paxton **POMYKAL**	(18) 17.12.99
18	Brandon **SERVANIA**	(19) 12.03.99
8	Victor **ULLOA** (Mex)	(26) 04.03.92

FORWARDS

13	Tesho **AKINDELE** (Can)	(26) 31.03.92
-	Mauro **CICHERO**	(22) 01.08.95
9	Cristian **COLMAN** (Par)	(24) 26.02.94
27	Jesus **FERREIRA** (Col)	(17) 24.12.00
20	Roland **LAMAH** (Blg)	(30) 31.12.87
11	Santiago **MOSQUERA** (Col)	(23) 07.02.95
29	Bryan **REYNOLDS**	(16) 28.06.01
37	Maximiliano **URRUTI** (Arg)	(27) 22.02.91

COACH

Oscar **PAREJA** (Col)		(49) 10.08.68

DC UNITED

GOALKEEPERS

26	Steve **CLARK**	(32) 14.04.86
1	David **OUSTED** (Den)	(33) 01.02.85

DEFENDERS

15	Steve **BIRNBAUM**	(27) 23.01.91
13	Frederic **BRILLANT** (Fra)	(32) 26.06.85
21	Chris **DURKIN**	(18) 08.02.00
2	Taylor **KEMP**	(27) 23.07.90
28	Joseph **MORA** (CR)	(25) 15.01.93
3	Chris **ODOI-ATSEM**	(22) 28.05.95
6	Kofi **OPARE** (Gha)	(27) 12.10.90
20	Jalen **ROBINSON**	(23) 08.05.94

MIDFIELDERS

10	Luciano **ACOSTA** (Arg)	(23) 31.05.94
4	Russell **CANOUSE**	(22) 11.06.95
14	Nick **DeLEON**	(27) 17.07.90
91	Oniel **FISHER** (Jam)	(26) 22.11.91
23	Ian **HARKES**	(23) 30.03.95
25	Jared **JEFFREY**	(27) 14.06.90
5	Junior **MORENO** (Ven)	(24) 20.07.93
8	Ulises **SEGURA** (CR)	(24) 23.06.93
18	Zoltan **STIEBER** (Hun)	(29) 16.10.88

FORWARDS

7	Paul **ARRIOLA**	(23) 05.02.95
22	Yamil **ASAD** (Arg)	(23) 24.07.94
11	Darren **MATTOCKS** (Jam)	(27) 02.09.90
16	Patrick **MULLINS**	(26) 05.02.92

COACH

Ben **OLSEN**		(40) 03.05.77

HOUSTON DYNAMO

GOALKEEPERS

26	Michael **NELSON**	(23) 10.02.95
18	Chris **SEITZ**	(31) 12.03.87
23	Joe **WILLIS**	(29) 10.08.88

DEFENDERS

7	DaMarcus **BEASLEY**	(35) 25.05.82
20	AJ **DeLaGARZA** (Gum)	(30) 04.11.87
2	Alejandro **FUENMAYOR** (Ven)	(21) 29.08.96
16	Kevin **GARCIA**	(27) 21.08.90
22	**LEONARDO** (Bra)	(30) 05.02.88
3	Adolfo **MACHADO** (Pan)	(33) 14.02.85
15	Dylan **REMICK**	(26) 19.05.91
4	Philippe **SENDEROS** (Swi)	(33) 14.02.85

MIDFIELDERS

6	Eric **ALEXANDER**	(30) 14.04.88
12	Arturo **ALVAREZ** (ElS)	(32) 28.06.85
25	Eric **BIRD**	(25) 08.04.93
5	Juan David **CABEZAS** (Col)	(27) 27.02.91
24	Darwin **CEREN** (ElS)	(28) 31.12.89
27	Boniek **GARCIA** (Hon)	(33) 04.09.84
21	George **MALKI**	(25) 21.04.92
10	Tomas **MARTINEZ** (Arg)	(23) 07.03.95
8	Memo **RODRIGUEZ**	(22) 27.12.95
14	Charlie **WARD** (Eng)	(23) 19.02.95

FORWARDS

17	Alberth **ELIS** (Hon)	(22) 12.02.96
9	Mauro **MANOTAS** (Col)	(22) 15.07.95
31	Romell **QUIOTO** (Hon)	(26) 09.08.91
19	Mac **STEEVES**	(23) 31.07.94
11	Andrew **WENGER**	(27) 25.12.90

COACH

Wilmer **CABRERA** (Col)		(50) 15.09.67

MLS 2018

LA GALAXY

GOALKEEPERS

1	David **BINGHAM**	(28) 19.10.89
12	Brian **SYLVESTRE**	(25) 19.12.92
41	Justin **VOM STEEG**	(21) 05.04.97

DEFENDERS

21	Hugo **ARELLANO**	(20) 05.03.98
28	Michael **CIANI** (Fra)	(34) 06.04.84
3	Ashley **COLE** (Eng)	(37) 20.12.80
25	Rolf **FELTSCHER** (Ven)	(27) 06.10.90
20	Tomas **HILLIARD-ARCE**	(22) 22.11.95
22	Emrah **KLIMENTA** (Mne)	(27) 13.02.91
4	David **ROMNEY**	(24) 12.06.93
16	Jorgen **SKJELVIK** (Nor)	(26) 05.07.91
5	Daniel **STERES**	(27) 11.11.90

MIDFIELDERS

7	Romain **ALESSANDRINI** (Fra)	(29) 03.04.89
24	Emmanuel **BOATENG** (Gha)	(24) 17.01.94
14	Servando **CARRASCO**	(29) 13.08.88
8	Jonathan **DOS SANTOS** (Mex)	(27) 26.04.90
6	Baggio **HUSIDIC** (Bos)	(30) 19.05.87
88	**JOAO PEDRO** (Por)	(25) 03.04.93
2	Perry **KITCHEN**	(26) 29.02.92
17	Sebastian **LLETGET**	(25) 03.09.92
19	Chris **PONTIUS**	(30) 12.05.87

FORWARDS

10	Giovani **DOS SANTOS** (Mex)	(28) 11.05.89
9	Zlatan **IBRAHIMOVIC** (Swe)	(36) 03.10.81
38	Bradford **JAMIESON** IV	(21) 18.10.96
11	Ola **KAMARA** (Nor)	(28) 15.10.89
15	Ariel **LASSITER** (CR)	(23) 27.09.94

COACH

Sigi **SCHMID**	(65) 20.03.53

LOS ANGELES FC

GOALKEEPERS

22	Luis **LOPEZ** (Hon)	(24) 13.09.93
24	Charlie **LYON**	(26) 10.04.92
1	Tyler **MILLER**	(25) 12.03.93

DEFENDERS

3	Steven **BEITASHOUR** (Irn)	(31) 01.02.87
27	Tristan **BLACKMON**	(21) 12.08.96
23	Laurent **CIMAN** (Blg)	(32) 05.08.85
4	Omar **GABER** (Egy)	(25) 30.03.92
2	Jordan **HARVEY**	(34) 28.01.84
5	Dejan **JAKOVIC** (Can)	(32) 16.07.85
44	Joao **MOUTINHO** (Por)	(20) 12.01.98
25	Walker **ZIMMERMAN**	(24) 19.05.93

MIDFIELDERS

20	Eduard **ATUESTA** (Col)	(20) 18.06.97
33	Benny **FEILHABER**	(33) 19.01.85
14	Mark-Anthony **KAYE** (Can)	(23) 02.12.94
11	Aaron **KOVAR**	(24) 14.08.93
16	Calum **MALLACE** (Sco)	(28) 10.01.90
19	James **MURPHY**	(20) 17.09.97

FORWARDS

7	Latif **BLESSING** (Gha)	(21) 30.12.96
28	Shaft **BREWER JR**	(18) 28.10.99
50	Rodrigo **PACHECO** (Arg)	(21) 15.08.96
9	Diego **ROSSI** (Uru)	(20) 05.03.98
21	Marco **URENA** (CR)	(28) 05.03.90
10	Carlos **VELA** (Mex)	(29) 01.03.89

COACH

Bob **BRADLEY**	(60) 03.03.58

MINNESOTA UNITED

GOALKEEPERS

24	Alex **KAPP**	(23) 18.10.94
28	Matt **LAMPSON**	(28) 06.09.89
33	Bobby **SHUTTLEWORTH**	(30) 13.05.87

DEFENDERS

25	Michael **BOXALL** (NZ)	(29) 18.08.88
8	Marc **BURCH**	(33) 07.05.84
5	Francisco **CALVO** (CR)	(25) 08.07.92
14	Brent **KALLMAN**	(27) 04.10.90
2	Carter **MANLEY**	(21) 29.04.96
4	Tyrone **MEARS**	(35) 18.02.83
22	Wyatt **OMSBERG**	(22) 21.09.95
15	Bertrand **OWUNDI** (Cam)	(24) 15.10.93
3	Jerome **THIESSON** (Swi)	(30) 06.08.87

MIDFIELDERS

6	Sam **CRONIN**	(31) 12.12.86
13	Ethan **FINLAY**	(27) 06.08.90
16	Harrison **HEATH** (Eng)	(21) 18.05.96
10	Miguel **IBARRA**	(28) 15.03.90
7	**IBSON** (Bra)	(34) 07.11.83
29	**LUIZ FERNANDO** (Bra)	(22) 08.05.95
17	Collin **MARTIN**	(23) 09.11.94
18	Kevin **MOLINO** (T&T)	(27) 17.06.90
12	Sam **NICHOLSON** (Sco)	(23) 20.01.95
19	Frantz **PANGOP** (Cam)	(24) 27.05.93
20	Rasmus **SCHULLER** (Fin)	(26) 18.06.91
26	Collen **WARNER**	(29) 24.06.88

FORWARDS

9	Abu **DANLADI** (Gha)	(22) 18.10.95
21	Christian **RAMIREZ**	(27) 04.04.91
23	Mason **TOYE**	(19) 16.10.98

COACH

Adrian **HEATH** (Eng)	(57) 11.01.61

MONTREAL IMPACT (Can)

GOALKEEPERS

40	Jason **BEAULIEU** (Can)	(24) 12.02.94
1	Evan **BUSH**	(32) 06.03.86
23	Clement **DIOP** (Sen)	(24) 12.10.93
41	James **PANTEMIS** (Can)	(21) 21.02.97

DEFENDERS

2	Victor **CABRERA** (Arg)	(25) 07.02.93
5	Zakaria **DIALLO** (Fra)	(31) 11.08.86
18	Chris **DUVALL**	(26) 10.09.91
15	Rod **FANNI** (Fra)	(36) 06.12.81
26	Kyle **FISHER**	(23) 19.06.94
22	Jukka **RAITALA** (Fin)	(29) 15.09.88

MIDFIELDERS

25	Louis **BELAND-GOYETTE** (Can)	(23) 15.09.94
17	David **CHOINIERE** (Can)	(21) 07.02.97
33	Marco **DONADEL** (Ita)	(34) 21.04.83
14	Raheem **EDWARDS** (Can)	(22) 17.07.95
13	Ken **KROLICKI** (Jap)	(22) 15.03.96
3	Daniel **LOVITZ**	(26) 27.08.91
10	Ignacio **PIATTI** (Arg)	(33) 04.02.85
6	Samuel **PIETTE** (Can)	(23) 12.11.94
24	Michael **PETRASSO** (Can)	(22) 09.07.95
28	Shamit **SHOME** (Can)	(20) 05.09.97
-	Alejandro **SILVA** (Uru)	(28) 04.09.89
8	Saphir **TAIDER** (Alg)	(26) 29.02.92

FORWARDS

11	Anthony **JACKSON-HAMEL** (Can)	(24) 03.08.93
21	Matteo **MANCOSU** (Ita)	(33) 22.12.84
7	Dominic **ODURO** (Gha)	(32) 13.08.85
16	Jeisson **VARGAS** (Chl)	(20) 15.12.97

COACH

Remi **GARDE** (Fra)	(52) 03.04.66

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

GOALKEEPERS

1	Cody **CROPPER**	(25) 16.02.93
18	Brad **KNIGHTON**	(33) 06.02.85
30	Matt **TURNER**	(23) 24.06.94

DEFENDERS

3	Jalil **ANIBABA**	(29) 19.10.88
4	Claude **DIELNA** (Fra)	(30) 14.12.87
19	Antonio **DELAMEA MLINAR** (Sln)	(26) 10.06.91
2	Andrew **FARRELL**	(26) 02.04.92
12	Nicolas **SAMAYOA** (Gtm)	(22) 02.08.95
91	Gabriel **SOMI** (Syr)	(26) 24.08.91
8	Chris **TIERNEY**	(32) 09.01.86

MIDFIELDERS

-	Isaac **ANGKING**	(18) 24.01.00
-	Luis **CAICEDO** (Col)	(21) 17.05.96
6	Scott **CALDWELL**	(27) 15.03.91
14	Diego **FAGUNDEZ** (Uru)	(23) 14.02.95
21	Zachary **HERIVAUX** (Hai)	(22) 01.02.96
24	Lee **NGUYEN**	(31) 07.10.86
11	Kelyn **ROWE**	(26) 25.12.91
23	Wilfried **ZAHIBO** (Fra)	(24) 21.08.93

FORWARDS

17	Juan **AGUDELO**	(25) 23.11.92
10	Teal **BUNBURY**	(28) 27.02.90
15	Brandon **BYE**	(22) 29.11.95
88	Femi **HOLLINGER-JANZEN** (Ben)	(24) 14.12.93
9	Krisztian **NEMETH** (Hun)	(29) 05.01.89
70	Cristian **PENILLA** (Ecu)	(26) 02.05.91
7	Brian **WRIGHT** (Can)	(22) 24.03.95

COACH

Brad **FRIEDEL**	(46) 18.05.71

NEW YORK CITY

GOALKEEPERS

18	Jeff **CALDWELL**	(22) 20.02.96
1	Sean **JOHNSON**	(28) 31.05.89
41	Brad **STUVER**	(27) 16.04.91

DEFENDERS

13	Saad **ABDUL-SALAAM**	(26) 08.09.91
6	Alexander **CALLENS** (Per)	(25) 04.05.92
4	Maxime **CHANOT** (Lux)	(28) 21.01.90
5	Cedric **HOUNTONDJI** (Ben)	(24) 19.01.94
33	Sebastien **IBEAGHA**	(26) 21.01.92
22	Ronald **MATARRITA** (CR)	(23) 09.07.94
2	Ben **SWEAT**	(26) 04.09.91
3	Anton **TINNERHOLM** (Swe)	(27) 26.02.91

MIDFIELDERS

14	Kwame **AWUAH** (Can)	(22) 02.12.95
30	Yangel **HERRERA** (Ven)	(20) 07.01.98
15	Tommy **McNAMARA**	(27) 06.02.91
19	Jesus **MEDINA** (Par)	(20) 30.04.97
10	Maximiliano **MORALEZ** (Arg)	(31) 27.02.87
12	Ebenezer **OFORI** (Gha)	(22) 01.07.95
8	Alexander **RING** (Fin)	(27) 09.04.91
16	James **SANDS**	(17) 06.07.00
29	Ismael **TAJOURI** (Lby)	(24) 28.03.94
23	Rodney **WALLACE** (CR)	(29) 17.06.88

FORWARDS

9	Jo Inge **BERGET** (Nor)	(27) 11.09.90
17	Jonathan **LEWIS**	(20) 04.06.97
7	David **VILLA** (Spa)	(36) 03.12.81

COACH

Patrick **VIEIRA** (Fra)	(41) 23.06.76

NEW YORK RED BULLS

GOALKEEPERS

24	Evan **LOURO**	(22) 19.01.96
18	Ryan **MEARA**	(27) 15.11.90
31	Luis **ROBLES**	(33) 11.05.84

DEFENDERS

78	Aurelien **COLLIN** (Fra)	(32) 08.03.86
6	Kyle **DUNCAN**	(20) 27.12.97
29	Fidel **ESCOBAR** (Pan)	(23) 09.01.95
5	Connor **LADE**	(28) 16.11.89
92	Kemar **LAWRENCE** (Jam)	(25) 17.09.92
33	Aaron **LONG**	(25) 12.10.92
62	Michael Amir **MURILLO** (Pan)	(22) 11.02.96
47	Hassan **NDAM** (Cam)	(19) 29.10.98
26	Tim **PARKER**	(25) 23.02.93
3	Kevin **POLITZ**	(22) 22.03.96
21	Tommy **REDDING**	(21) 24.01.97

MIDFIELDERS

4	Tyler **ADAMS**	(19) 14.02.99
88	Vincent **BEZECOURT** (Fra)	(24) 10.06.93
23	Cristian **CASSERES** (Ven)	(18) 20.01.00
27	Sean **DAVIS**	(25) 08.02.93
7	Derrick **ETIENNE** (Hai)	(21) 25.11.96
10	Alejandro **ROMERO** (Arg)	(23) 11.01.95
17	Ben **MINES**	(17) 12.05.00
11	Carlos **RIVAS** (Col)	(24) 15.04.94
77	Daniel **ROYER** (Aut)	(27) 22.05.90
90	Marc **RZATKOWSKI** (Ger)	(28) 02.03.90
22	Florian **VALOT** (Fra)	(25) 13.02.93

FORWARDS

25	Stefano **BONOMO**	(25) 25.01.93
20	Amando **MORENO**	(22) 10.09.95
19	Alex **MUYL**	(22) 30.09.95
99	Bradley **WRIGHT-PHILLIPS** (Eng)	(33) 12.03.85

COACH

Jesse **MARSCH**	(44) 08.11.73

ORLANDO CITY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Joe **BENDIK**	(28) 25.04.89
36	Earl **EDWARDS JR**	(26) 24.01.92
99	Adam **GRINWIS**	(25) 21.04.92
31	Mason **STAJDUHAR**	(20) 02.12.97

DEFENDERS

27	RJ **ALLEN**	(27) 17.04.90
13	Mohamed **EL MONIR** (Lby)	(25) 08.04.92
94	Victor **GIRO** (Bra)	(24) 10.03.94
22	Lamine **SANE** (Sen)	(31) 22.03.87
28	Chris **SCHULER**	(30) 06.09.87
2	Jonathan **SPECTOR**	(32) 01.03.86
21	Scott **SUTTER** (Swi)	(31) 13.05.86
3	Amro **TAREK** (Egy)	(25) 17.05.92
25	Donny **TOIA**	(25) 28.05.92

MIDFIELDERS

10	Josue **COLMAN** (Par)	(19) 25.07.98
7	Cristian **HIGUITA** (Col)	(24) 14.01.94
4	Will **JOHNSON** (Can)	(31) 21.01.87
16	Sacha **KLJESTAN**	(32) 09.09.85
6	Richie **LARYEA** (Can)	(23) 07.01.95
15	Cameron **LINDLEY**	(20) 18.07.97
9	Justin **MERAM** (Irq)	(29) 04.12.88
17	Chris **MUELLER**	(21) 28.08.96
5	Dillon **POWERS**	(27) 14.02.91
8	Tony **ROCHA**	(24) 21.08.93
20	Oriol **ROSELL** (Spa)	(25) 07.01.92
19	Yoshimar **YOTUN** (Per)	(27) 07.04.90

FORWARDS

11	Pierre **DA SILVA**	(19) 28.07.98
14	Dom **DWYER** (Eng)	(27) 30.07.90
29	Stefano **PINHO** (Bra)	(27) 12.01.91
33	Jose **VILLARREAL**	(24) 10.09.93

COACH

Jason **KREIS**	(45) 29.12.72

PHILADELPHIA UNION

GOALKEEPERS

18	Andre **BLAKE** (Jam)	(27) 21.11.90
1	John **McCARTHY**	(25) 04.07.92
29	Jake **McGUIRE**	(23) 03.09.94

DEFENDERS

2	Warren **CREAVALLE** (Guy)	(27) 14.08.90
3	Jack **ELLIOTT** (Eng)	(22) 24.08.95
33	**FABINHO** (Bra)	(33) 16.03.85
28	Ray **GADDIS**	(28) 12.01.90
16	Richie **MARQUEZ**	(25) 26.05.92
4	Mark **McKENZIE**	(19) 12.08.98
32	Matthew **REAL**	(18) 10.07.99
12	Keegan **ROSENBERRY**	(24) 11.12.93
26	Auston **TRUSTY**	(19) 12.08.98
15	Joshua **YARO** (Gha)	(24) 07.03.94

MIDFIELDERS

30	Eric **AYUK** (Cam)	(21) 17.02.97
11	Alejandro **BEDOYA**	(30) 29.04.87
10	Bolek **DOCKAL** (CzR)	(29) 30.09.88
21	Anthony **FONTANA**	(18) 14.10.99
14	Fabian **HERBERS** (Ger)	(24) 17.08.93
25	**ILSINHO** (Bra)	(32) 12.10.85
8	Derrick **JONES**	(21) 03.03.97
6	Haris **MEDUNJANIN** (Bos)	(33) 08.03.85
24	Adam **NAJEM**	(23) 19.01.95

FORWARDS

7	David **ACCAM** (Gha)	(27) 28.09.90
19	Cory **BURKE** (Jam)	(26) 28.12.91
20	Marcus **EPPS**	(23) 16.01.95
9	Fafa **PICAULT**	(27) 23.02.91
17	CJ **SAPONG**	(29) 27.12.88
27	Jay **SIMPSON** (Eng)	(29) 01.12.88

COACH

Jim **CURTIN**		(38) 23.06.79

PORTLAND TIMBERS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jeff **ATTINELLA**	(29) 29.09.88
90	Jake **GLEESON** (NZ)	(24) 24.01.94
43	Kendall **McINTOSH**	(27) 26.06.90

DEFENDERS

5	Vytautas **ANDRIUSKEVICIUS** (Lit)	(27) 08.10.90
18	Julio **CASCANTE** (CR)	(24) 03.10.93
32	Marco **FARFAN**	(19) 12.11.98
26	Modou **JADAMA** (Gam)	(14) 17.03.94
33	Larrys **MABIALA** (DRC)	(30) 08.10.87
7	Roy **MILLER** (CR)	(33) 28.11.84
2	Alvas **POWELL** (Jam)	(23) 18.07.94
24	Liam **RIDGEWELL**	(33) 21.06.84
16	Zarek **VALENTIN**	(26) 06.08.91

MIDFIELDERS

27	Dairon **ASPRILLA** (Col)	(25) 25.05.92
23	Jack **BARMBY** (Eng)	(23) 14.11.94
10	Sebastian **BLANCO** (Arg)	(30) 15.03.88
21	Diego **CHARA** (Col)	(32) 05.04.86
14	Andres **FLORES** (ElS)	(27) 31.08.90
20	David **GUZMAN** (CR)	(28) 18.02.90
13	Lawrence **OLUM** (Ken)	(33) 10.07.84
22	Cristhian **PAREDES** (Par)	(19) 18.05.98
25	Bill **TUILOMA** (NZ)	(23) 27.03.95
8	Diego **VALERI** (Arg)	(31) 01.05.86
30	Eryk **WILLIAMSON**	(20) 11.06.97

FORWARDS

9	Fanendo **ADI** (Nga)	(27) 10.10.90
19	Victor **ARBOLEDA** (Col)	(21) 01.01.97
99	Samuel **ARMENTEROS** (Swe)	(27) 27.05.90
17	Jeremy **EBOBISSE**	(21) 14.02.97
28	Foster **LANGSDORF**	(22) 14.12.95
11	Andy **POLO** (Per)	(23) 29.09.94

COACH

Giovanni **SAVARESE** (Ven)		(46) 14.07.71

REAL SALT LAKE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Alex **HORWATH**	(31) 27.03.87
18	Nick **RIMANDO**	(38) 17.06.79
24	Connor **SPARROW**	(23) 10.05.94

DEFENDERS

26	Shawn **BARRY**	(27) 23.04.90
2	Tony **BELTRAN**	(30) 11.10.87
15	Justen **GLAD**	(21) 28.02.97
3	Adam **HENLEY** (Wal)	(23) 14.06.94
22	Aaron **HERRERA**	(20) 06.06.97
4	David **HORST**	(32) 25.10.85
17	Demar **PHILLIPS** (Jam)	(34) 03.09.83
21	Taylor **PEAY**	(26) 05.09.91
30	Marcelo **SILVA** (Uru)	(29) 21.03.89

MIDFIELDERS

25	Danilo **ACOSTA**	(20) 07.11.97
70	Jordan **ALLEN**	(22) 25.04.95
27	Corey **BAIRD**	(21) 21.01.97
5	Kyle **BECKERMAN**	(35) 23.04.82
13	Nick **BESLER**	(24) 07.05.93
29	Jose **HERNANDEZ** (Mex)	(22) 12.04.96
6	Damir **KREILACH** (Cro)	(29) 16.04.89
19	Luke **MULHOLLAND** (Eng)	(29) 07.08.88
31	Pablo **RUIZ** (Arg)	(19) 20.10.98
11	Albert **RUSNAK** (Slk)	(23) 07.07.94
23	Sebastian **SAUCEDO** (Mex)	(21) 22.02.97
7	Jefferson **SAVARINO** (Ven)	(21) 11.11.96
20	Luis **SILVA**	(29) 10.12.88
8	Stephen **SUNDAY** (Nga)	(29) 17.09.88

FORWARDS

-28	Ricky **LOPEZ-ESPIN**	(22) 02.12.95
12	Brooks **LENNON**	(20) 22.09.97
16	Alfredo **ORTUNO** (Spa)	(27) 21.01.91
10	Joao **PLATA** (Ecu)	(26) 01.03.92

COACH

Mike **PETKE**		(42) 30.01.76

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES

GOALKEEPERS

12	Matt **BERSANO**	(25) 10.09.92
18	JT **MARCINKOWSKI**	(20) 09.05.97
28	Andrew **TARBELL**	(24) 07.10.93

DEFENDERS

3	Francois **AFFOLTER** (Swi)	(27) 13.03.91
31	Harold **CUMMINGS** (Pan)	(26) 01.03.92
23	Florian **JUNGWIRTH** (Ger)	(29) 27.01.89
24	Nick **LIMA**	(23) 17.11.94
15	Jimmy **OCKFORD**	(25) 10.06.92
30	Yeferson **QUINTANA** (Uru)	(22) 19.04.96
2	Joel **QWIBERG** (Swe)	(25) 09.10.92

MIDFIELDERS

29	Jacob **AKANYIRIGE**	(16) 31.12.01
27	Fatai **ALASHE**	(24) 21.10.93
26	Eric **CALVILLO**	(20) 02.01.98
96	Luis **FERNADES**	(22) 29.01.96
35	Gilbert **FUENTES**	(16) 21.02.02
20	Anibal **GODOY** (Pan)	(28) 10.02.90
10	Jahmir **HYKA** (Alb)	(30) 08.03.88
11	Valeri **QAZAISHVILI** (Geo)	(25) 29.01.93
6	Shea **SALINAS**	(31) 24.06.86
22	Tommy **THOMPSON**	(22) 15.08.95
16	Chris **WEHAN**	(24) 29.01.94
14	Jackson **YUEILL**	(21) 18.03.97

FORWARDS

25	Quincy **AMARIKWA**	(30) 29.10.87
7	Magnus **ERIKSSON** (Swe)	(28) 08.04.90
9	Danny **HOESEN** (Hol)	(27) 15.01.91
8	Chris **WONDOLOWSKI**	(35) 28.01.83

COACH

Mikael **STAHRE** (Swe)		(42) 05.07.75

SEATTLE SOUNDERS

GOALKEEPERS

25	Calle **BROWN**	(25) 01.07.92
24	Stefan **FREI** (Swi)	(32) 20.04.86
35	Bryan **MEREDITH**	(28) 02.08.89

DEFENDERS

15	Tony **ALFARO** (Mex)	(24) 15.06.93
90	Waylon **FRANCIS** (CR)	(27) 20.09.90
20	**KIM** Kee-hee (SKo)	(28) 13.07.89
18	Kelvin **LEERDAM** (Hol)	(27) 24.06.90
14	Chad **MARSHALL**	(33) 22.08.84
30	Jordan **McCRARY**	(24) 28.07.93
29	Roman **TORRES** (Pan)	(32) 20.03.86
5	Nouhou **TOLO** (Cam)	(20) 23.06.97

MIDFIELDERS

6	Osvaldo **ALONSO** (Cub)	(32) 11.11.85
21	Jordy **DELEM** (Mar)	(25) 18.03.93
22	Magnus Wolff **EIKREM** (Nor)	(27) 08.08.90
10	Nicolas **LODEIRO** (Uru)	(29) 21.03.89
27	Lamar **NEAGLE**	(30) 07.05.87
8	Victor **RODRIGUEZ** (Spa)	(28) 23.07.89
16	Alex **ROLDAN**	(21) 28.07.96
7	Cristian **ROLDAN**	(22) 03.06.95
19	Harry **SHIPP**	(26) 07.11.91
4	Gustav **SVENSSON** (Swe)	(31) 07.02.87

FORWARDS

12	Seyi **ADEKOYA**	(22) 05.12.95
17	Will **BRUIN**	(28) 24.10.89
70	Handwalla **BWANA** (Ken)	(18) 25.06.99
2	Clint **DEMPSEY**	(35) 09.03.83
13	Jordan **MORRIS**	(23) 26.10.94
23	Henry **WINGO**	(22) 04.10.95

COACH

Brian **SCHMETZER**		(55) 18.08.62

SPORTING KANSAS CITY

GOALKEEPERS

18	Eric **DICK**	(23) 03.10.94
29	Tim **MELIA**	(31) 15.05.86
1	Adrian **ZENDEJAS**	(22) 30.08.95

DEFENDERS

22	Emiliano **AMOR** (Arg)	(22) 16.05.95
5	Matt **BESLER**	(31) 11.02.87
2	Amer **DIDIC** (Can)	(23) 28.12.94
88	Matt **LEWIS**	(21) 01.08.96
26	Jaylin **LINDSEY**	(17) 27.03.00
94	Jimmy **MEDRANDA** (Col)	(24) 07.02.94
3	Ike **OPARA**	(29) 21.02.89
15	Seth **SINOVIC**	(31) 28.01.87
16	Graham **SMITH**	(22) 25.11.95
23	Colton **STORM**	(23) 06.07.94
8	Graham **ZUSI**	(31) 18.08.86

MIDFIELDERS

10	Yohan **CROIZET** (Fra)	(26) 15.02.92
17	Roger **ESPINOZA** (Hon)	(31) 25.10.86
21	Felipe **GUTIERREZ** (Chl)	(27) 08.10.90
19	Cristian **LOBATO** (Spa)	(29) 07.03.89
6	Ilie **SANCHEZ** (Spa)	(27) 21.11.90

FORWARDS

90	Kharlton **BELMAR**	(25) 01.12.92
13	Gianluca **BUSIO**	(15) 28.05.02
12	Gerso **FERNANDES** (GuB)	(27) 23.02.91
11	Diego **RUBIO** (Chl)	(24) 15.05.93
7	Johnny **RUSSELL** (Sco)	(28) 08.04.90
20	Daniel **SALLOI** (Hun)	(21) 19.07.96
14	Khiry **SHELTON**	(24) 26.06.93

COACH

Peter **VERMES**		(51) 21.11.66

TORONTO (Can)

GOALKEEPERS

25	Alex **BONO**	(23) 25.04.94
1	Clint **IRWIN**	(29) 01.04.89
-	Caleb **PATTERSON-SEWELL**	(30) 20.05.87

DEFENDERS

96	**AURO** (Bra)	(22) 23.01.96
6	Nick **HAGGLUND**	(25) 14.09.92
23	Chris **MAVINGA** (DRC)	(26) 26.05.91
3	Drew **MOOR**	(34) 15.01.84
5	Ashtone **MORGAN** (Can)	(27) 09.02.91
2	Justin **MORROW**	(30) 04.10.87
9	Gregory **VAN DER WIEL** (Hol)	(30) 03.02.88
15	Eriq **ZAVALETA**	(25) 02.08.92

MIDFIELDERS

8	Ager **AKETXE** (Spa)	(24) 30.12.93
4	Michael **BRADLEY**	(30) 31.07.87
14	Jay **CHAPMAN** (Can)	(24) 01.01.94
18	Marky **DELGADO**	(22) 16.05.95
63	Liam **FRASER** (Can)	(20) 13.02.98
26	Nicolas **HASLER** (Lie)	(26) 04.05.91
21	Jonathan **OSORIO** (Can)	(25) 12.06.92
7	Victor **VAZQUEZ** (Spa)	(31) 20.01.87

FORWARDS

20	Ayo **AKINOLA**	(18) 20.01.00
17	Jozy **ALTIDORE**	(28) 06.11.89
10	Sebastian **GIOVINCO** (Ita)	(31) 26.01.87
22	Jordan **HAMILTON** (Can)	(22) 17.03.96
87	Tosaint **RICKETTS** (Can)	(30) 06.08.87
19	Ben **SPENCER**	(23) 28.03.95

COACH

Greg **VANNEY**		(43) 11.06.74

VANCOUVER WHITECAPS (Can)

GOALKEEPERS

1	Stefan **MARINOVIC** (NZ)	(26) 07.10.91
12	Brian **ROWE**	(29) 16.11.88

DEFENDERS

18	Jose **AJA** (Uru)	(24) 10.05.93
3	Sean **FRANKLIN**	(33) 21.03.85
2	Doneil **HENRY** (Can)	(25) 20.04.93
6	Efrain **JUAREZ** (Mex)	(30) 22.02.88
46	Brett **LEVIS** (Can)	(24) 29.05.93
22	Aaron **MAUND**	(27) 19.09.90
28	Jake **NERWINSKI**	(23) 17.10.94
4	Kendall **WASTON** (CR)	(30) 01.01.88

MIDFIELDERS

67	Alphonso **DAVIES** (Can)	(17) 02.11.00
17	Marcel **DE JONG** (Can)	(31) 15.10.86
8	**FELIPE** (Bra)	(27) 30.09.90
66	Ali **GHAZAL** (Egy)	(26) 01.02.92
11	Nicolas **MEZQUIDA** (Uru)	(26) 21.01.92
77	Jordon **MUTCH** (Eng)	(26) 02.12.91
24	David **NORMAN JR** (Can)	(19) 31.05.98
20	Brek **SHEA**	(28) 28.02.90
13	Cristian **TECHERA** (Uru)	(25) 31.05.92
31	Russell **TEIBERT** (Can)	(25) 22.12.92

FORWARDS

45	Myer **BEVAN** (NZ)	(20) 23.04.97
9	Anthony **BLONDELL** (Ven)	(23) 17.05.94
19	Erik **HURTADO**	(27) 11.05.90
7	Bernie **IBINI-ISEI** (Aus)	(25) 12.09.92
23	Kei **KAMARA** (SLe)	(33) 01.09.84
29	Yordy **REYNA** (Per)	(24) 16.09.93

COACH

Carl **ROBINSON** (Wal)		(41) 13.10.76

(Age as of 20.04.18)

Tussle...Chiefs' Siphiwe Tshabalala (left) and Issa Sarr of Orlando Pirates

KAIZER CHIEFS v ORLANDO PIRATES

A local affair that captures the hearts of all South Africa

An abbreviation of South Western Townships, Soweto is an urban area of Johannesburg that is home to two teams whose support spreads all across South Africa and beyond.

First contested in 1970, the Soweto derby came about after ex Orlando Pirates striker Kaizer Motaung decided to form his own club when his former club released four old team-mates.

Having left South Africa in 1968 to play for Atlanta Chiefs in the USA, Motaung set up his new side on returning home two years later. Today, the Chiefs have more than 16 million fans and have been national champions 12 times.

The Pirates – who were formed in 1937 by the children of migrant workers who had moved to the townships from rural areas to work in the gold mines – have been champions of South Africa nine times. However, in 1995, they became the first South African side to win the CAF Champions League.

With such huge interest in the two sides, the fixture has been played all over the country. However, such demand to see the game has unfortunately led to tragedy in the past.

Passionate...Pirates supporters

In 1991, 42 people were crushed to death at the Oppenheimer Stadium in Orkney – a provincial town 125 miles from Soweto – while 10 years later 43 supporters died in a stampede at Johannesburg's Ellis Park after an estimated 120,000 fans gained entry to the 60,000-capacity stadium. WS

ON BOTH SIDES

POLLEN NDLANYA
● 1990-91 & 1994-96
● 2000-02

MUHSIN ERTUGRAL
● 1999-2003, 2007-09 (both as coach)
● 2016 (as coach)

JABU MAHLANGU
● 1999-2004
● 2006-07

JIMMY TAU
● 2002-05
● 2005-13

ARTHUR ZWANE
● 1996-97
● 2000-10

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

1970 Jan 24
The first encounter was a play-off game in an eight-team tournament sponsored by a local brewery. A curtain-raiser to the Final later in the day, Pirates won 6-4 in what remains the joint-highest-scoring game between the two sides.

1971 Apr 24
A first league meeting saw Pirates open up a three-goal lead before Chiefs came back to win 4-3.

1972 Feb 12
After drawing 3-3 in the first leg, Chiefs trailed 2-0 at half-time in the return game of the Champion of Champions Final before recovering to draw level and then win 7-3 in an extra-time goal-fest.

1990 Nov 3
The biggest-ever victory in the Soweto derby was all the more enjoyable for Pirates fans as their 5-1 success would ultimately help to deprive their great rivals of the league title.

2018 Mar 3
The 163rd match between the pair saw Pirates win 3-1 in the PSL to stretch the Chiefs' barren run in the fixture to an unprecedented eight games without a win.

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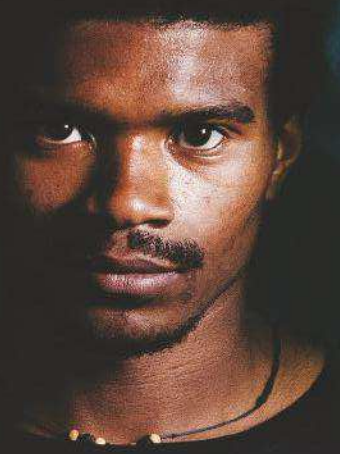

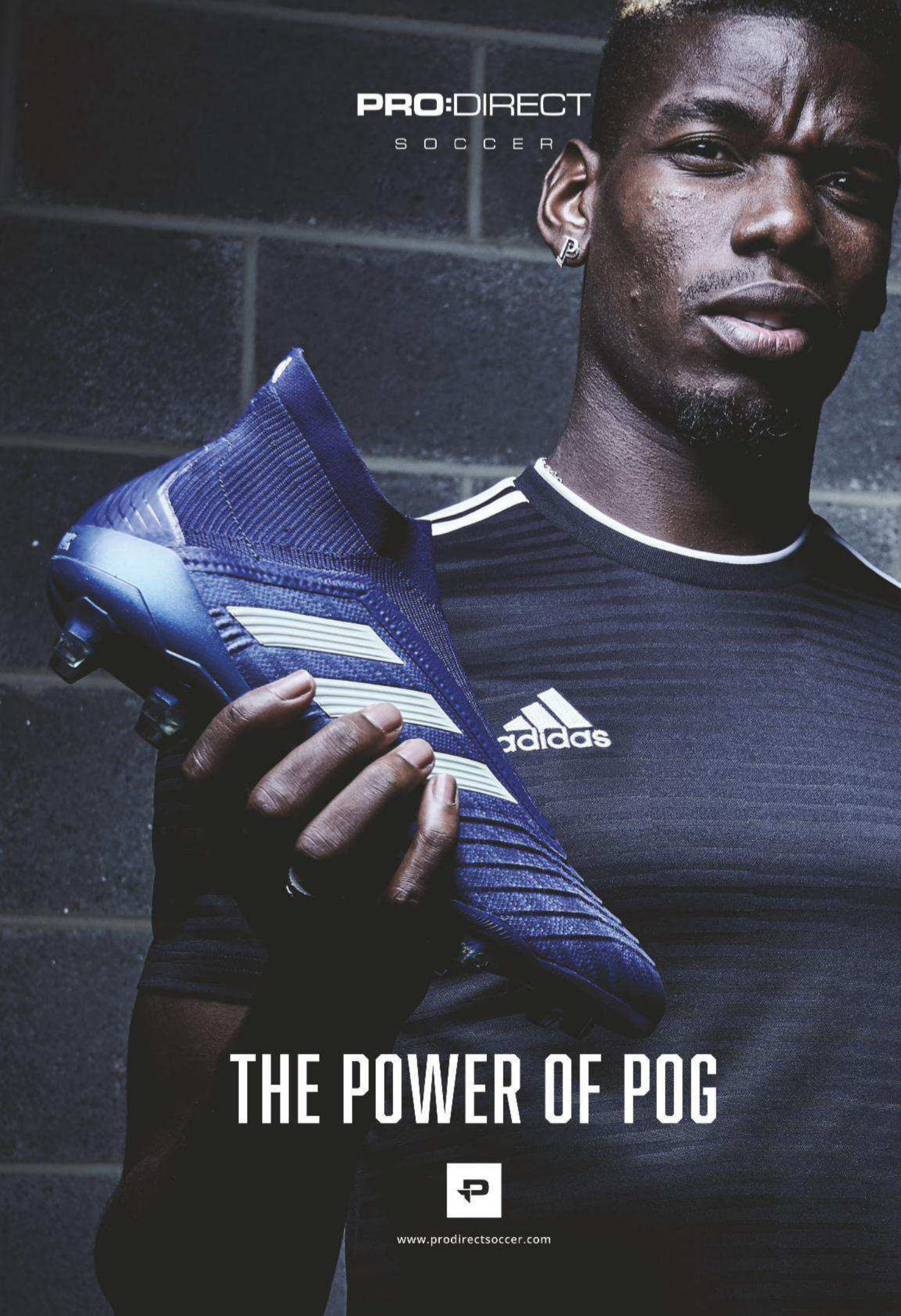
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